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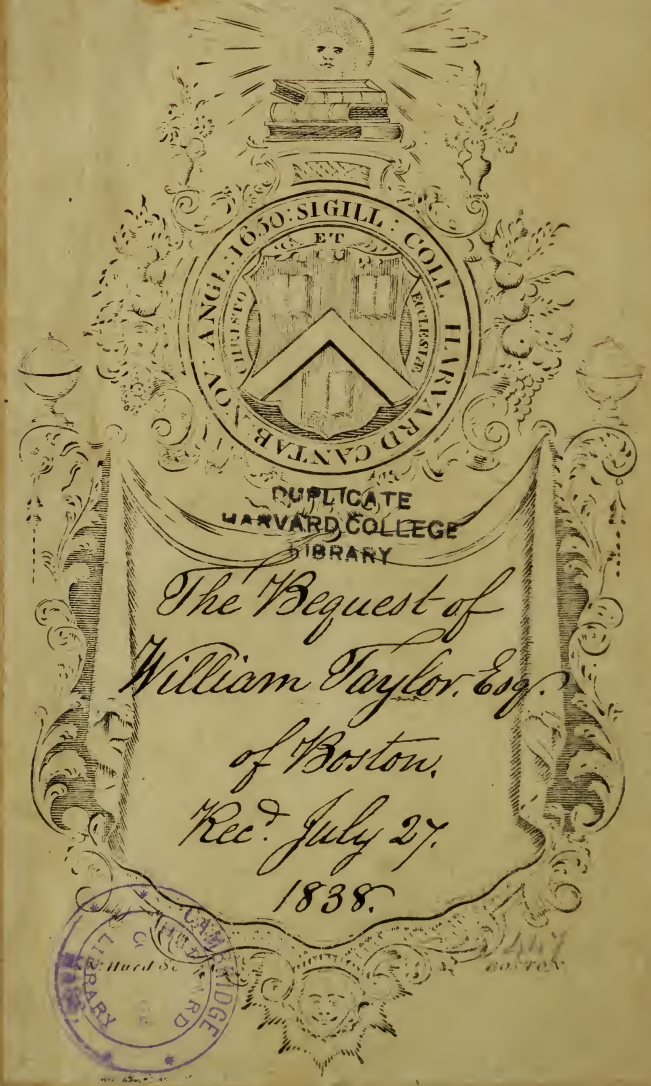

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Christiani Patteri
by
Thomas a Kempis

The Christian's Pattern:

OR, A

TREATISE

OF THE

IMITATION

OF

JESUS CHRIST.

In FOUR BOOKS.

Written Originally in LATIN by

THOMAS à KEMPIS.

Now Rendered into ENGLISH.

To which are added,

Meditations and Prayers.

For SICK PERSONS.

By GEORGE STANHOPE, D.D. late Dean of CANTERBURY, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

LONDON:

Printed for D. Browne, C. Hitch and L. Hawes, C. Bathurst, B. Dod, B. Barker, John Rivington, James Rivington and J. Fletcher, R. Baldwin, J. Ward, W. Johnston, S. Crowder, P. Davey and B. Law, T. Longman, T. Caslon, H. Woodgate and S. Brooks, A. Richards, M. Cooper, and C. Ware. 1759.

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To the Honoured

Mrs. Julia Shalcrosse,

of

Hatfield Woodhall, in *Hertfordshire*.

Madam,

IT is not merely from an Ambition to make the most publick Profession of my Gratitude, that I take the Confidence of presenting You with this Book; but because I apprehend it, in a peculiar manner suitable to your Circumstances, and qualified for a favourable Acceptance. The constant Strain of Piety, which animates the whole Composition, will not fail to recommend it to so Excellent and Devout a Person: And the many moving Reflections upon Afflicted Virtue are so exactly calculated for those Tryals, which the Divine Providence (always Wise and Good) hath thought fit to exercise you with; that as they passed under my Pen, they frequently brought You into my Thoughts: You, Madam, who have so great Occasion for, so just a Title to, those true Comforts administred here. For indeed the only true Comforts in Trouble, are such as Religion supplies Men with. And those, Madam, are so powerful, that I cannot but pro-

mise myself, You will taste the sweet Refreshments they bring, if these Meditations shall be allowed the Privilege of bearing You Company in your most melancholy Retirements.

My Design in Publishing this Book, as it now appears, was to recommend, and render it serviceable to all Christian Readers in general. But among Them there is not Any, in contributing to whose Benefit and Satisfaction I should esteem my Labours more successfully answered, than to Yours: Who have by so many Instances of Goodness obliged me to be, with all possible Sincerity and Respect,

MADAM,

Your most Affectionate Cousin,

and most Humble Servant,

GEO. STANHOPE.

THE

PREFACE

TO THE

READER.

THE Reputation of this little Book, with which the Reader is here preſented, ſeems abundantly eſtabliſhed, by the great Pains taken to communicate it to Mankind, in moſt Languages of the Chriſtian World. But, ſince the *Engliſh* Verſion, hitherto in uſe, was in ſome Places grown obſolete, and in many fell ſhort of that Life and Spirit requiſite for ſuch Devotional Tracts, it was thought expedient to recommend it by a Style more modern, and a little better ſuited to Subjects of this Nature.

In this Attempt the *Latin* of *Caſtalio* is chiefly followed; He hath taken ſome Liberty in Places peculiarly relating to the *Romiſh* Superſtitions. And the preſent Tranſlator hath not only trodden in his Steps thus far; but, in the Chapters which concern a Monkiſh Life particularly, hath endeavoured ſo to expreſs himſelf for the moſt part, as that ſuch Meditations might be ac-

commodated to the Circumſtances of any Pious Chriſtian, who declines the Pleaſures and Buſineſs, and other Interruptions of the World, and ſequeſters himſelf to the Exerciſe of Devotion and ſeverer Virtues.

This was thought moſt agreeable to the great Deſign he had in view, That of rendering theſe Reflections of general Uſe to the World. For which reaſon alſo, he hath not been nicely cloſe in many of the Flights uſually with theſe Contemplative and Myſtical Divines. Thinking it better, either to give thoſe Rapturous Paſſages another Turn; or, by Additions and Illuſtrations of his own, to bring them down to the common Condition of Human Life, and fit them for the Mouths of every Sincere Practical Chriſtian.

In order to preſerve the Zeal and Spirit of the Author, it was found neceſſary, ſometimes to abridge, and at others to enlarge a Thought, and carry it a little higher. All which the Reader hath this Warning of, to prevent any Objections, which might otherwiſe be raiſed againſt the Faithfulneſs of an Undertaking, intended, not ſo much to acquaint *Engliſhmen* what *Kempis* thought, as to convey thoſe Thoughts with ſome Degree of that Sprightlineſs and Affectionate Warmth, which the Original Compoſer at firſt felt from them.

And becauſe the Reader will perhaps expect ſome Account of Him, here follows in brief the Subſtance of what *Roſweid* hath delivered concerning him.

" This

" This *Thomas* was called *à Kempis*, from a " little Village of that Name, in the Dioceſe of " *Cologne*, where he was Born in the Year of " our Lord 1380. His Parentage and Fortune " were mean: At Thirteen Years old he began " his Studies, and about Nineteen betook himſelf " to a Monaſtery of *Auguſtin*. Monks: About " Five and Twenty he took the Habit of that " Houſe and Order. There he continued, for " the ſpace of Seventy Years, particularly emi- " nent for his Piety, Humility, diligent Study " of the Holy Scriptures, Auſterity of Life, " moving Eloquence in Diſcourſe, and extraor- " dinary Zeal in Prayer. For his Perſon, He was " of a middle Stature, of a ſtrong brown Com- " plexion, a lively piercing Eye, and a Sight ſo " good, that though he laboured much under " other Infirmities of Old Age, yet he was never " reduced to the Uſe of Spectacles. He died " *July* 25, 1471. in the Ninety-ſecond Year of " his Age."

As to the Diſpute whether this Book was of his Compoſition, I am content to ſubmit to common Fame, and leave him in quiet Poſſeſſion: Not ſeeing of what Conſequence it can be to call his Title in queſtion, or to examine into the Merits of other Pretenders.

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OF

OF THE IMITATION OF Jesus Christ.

The First Book.

Chap. I.

Of the Contempt of the Vanities of the World.

HE *that followeth me, shall not walk in Darkness, but shall have the Light of Life*, says that Christ, who declares himself *The Light of the World.* The true Importance and Design of which Words is doubtless to instruct us, that the way to be truly Enlightened, and to deliver ourselves from a Blindness of Heart, is to make his Holy Life the Object of our Imitation, and to form our Dispositions and Actions upon the perfect Model of that bright Example. But how shall we follow a Pattern, which we but little think of? The first Step therefore toward thus Copying after him, is the employing our Thoughts, with great Frequency and serious Attention, upon the Perfections of this Divine Original. *John* viii. 12.

2. The

2. The Doctrine taught by Christ, excels all the Instructions delivered to Mankind, by all the holy Men that ever lived. And every Man, endued with a true Christian Spirit, will not fail there to find a hidden Manna, like that of old, fitted both to nourish, and minister Delight to his Soul. The true Account then why Men hear the Gospel without any sensible Relish, or eager Desire, is, that they are not endued with the Spirit of Christ. This is a Treasure found of them only who desire to find it; and a Man must resolve and endeavour to form his whole Conversation upon the Principles of that Doctrine, before he can attain to a full Understanding of its Excellence, and feel an inward Satisfaction in the Study of it.

3. And here indeed lies the true Benefit of Meditation and Knowledge. For, without this, how poor and unprofitable a Thing is Speculation? What is a Man the better, for entering into the sublime Mysteries of the Trinity, and being able to dispute nicely upon that adorable Union; if in the mean while he want that Meekness and Humility, without which he must needs lie under the Displeasure of the Trinity? Certain it is, that Distinctions and Notions, tho' ever so subtile or serviceable to the Truth, do not make a Man Just and Holy; But a careful and conscientious Life recommends us to the Favour and Love of God. I had rather be affected with a true penitent Sorrow for Sin, than be able to resolve the most difficult Cases about it. Suppose you had all the Bible faithfully treasured up in your Memory, and a perfect Comprehension of all the Moral Philosophy in the World; To what purpose serves this mighty Stock of Rules, if not drawn out into Use by Charity, and seconded by Divine Grace? *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*, said the Preacher; and his Observation admits of that single Exception, taken notice of in the Conclusion of his Book, *Love God, and keep his Commandments; for*

Eccles. i. 2.

for this is the whole of Man. He, who would approve himſelf wiſe in good earneſt, muſt firſt by a juſt Contempt of this World, raiſe himſelf up to the Deſires and Endeavours after the Kingdom of Heaven. *Chap.* xii. 13.

4. Vanity moſt certainly it is, with great Solicitude to ſeek, and place our Hope and Confidence in Riches, which are ſure to periſh. Vanity, to cheriſh our Ambition, and ſtrive, by all poſſible Means to attain an high and honourable Station. Vanity, to indulge the Deſires of the Fleſh, and court thoſe Pleaſures, which draw after them grievous and laſting Pains. Vanity moſt exquiſite, to be infinitely concerned for living long, and perfectly indifferent, or but coldly affected, concerning living well. Vanity moſt fatal and ſtupid, to determine our Thoughts and Cares to this Life preſent, and never look forward to that which is to come. To doat upon things that fly ſwiftly from us, and cling faſt about imaginary and tranſitory Delights; while we ſuffer ourſelves by theſe to be detained and diverted from the Purſuit of ſubſtantial and eternal Joys.

5. Oh turn this Vehemence of Deſire upon the right Object, and remember to how little purpoſe it is placed on that which cannot give Content; ſince moſt true is that Obſervation, which ought to make us wiſer, *The Eye is not ſatisfied with Seeing, nor the Ear filled with Hearing.* Uſe then thy utmoſt Diligence, to wean thy Soul from *the Love of the Things that are ſeen,* and *ſet thy Affections on Things that are not ſeen.* For, be aſſured, that they who follow their own ſenſual Appetites, do loſe, not only their Labour and Expectation, but alſo their Innocence and Purity, the Peace of their own Conſcience, and the Favour of Almighty God. *Eccleſ.* i. 8.

CHAP.

Chap. II.

Modeſty.

THE Deſire of Knowledge is natural to every Man, but what Advantage is it to be knowing, if that Knowledge be not ſeaſoned with Virtue and Religion? The vileſt Peaſant, and he, whom we in ſcorn think leaſt removed from a Brute, if he ſerve God according to the beſt of his mean Capacity, is yet a better and more valuable Man, than the proudeſt Philoſopher, who buſies himſelf in conſidering the Motions of the Heavens, but beſtows no Reflection at all upon thoſe of his own Mind. The certain Conſequence of knowing a Man's ſelf truly, is a mean Opinion of himſelf, and not being exalted with the Commendations of other People. And ſuppoſing my Knowledge ſo vaſt and extenſive, that nothing this World contains were hid from it; yet what would all this avail me in the Sight of God, who, when he comes to Judgment, will try me upon the Iſſue, not of what I have known, but what I have done?

2. Reſtrain that extreme Deſire of increaſing Learning, which at the ſame time does but increaſe Sorrow, by involving the Mind in much Perplexity and falſe Deluſion. For ſuch are fond of being thought Men of Wiſdom, and reſpected as ſuch: And yet this boaſted Learning of theirs conſiſts in many Things, which a Man's Mind is very little, if at all, the better for the Knowledge of. And ſure, whatever they may think of the Matter, he who beſtows his Time and Pains upon Things, that are of no Service for promoting the Happineſs of his Soul, ought by no means to be eſteemed a wiſe Man. Words and Notions give no inward Satisfaction; but a Virtuous Life never fails to comfort and refreſh the Mind, and to miniſter the beſt Antidote

againſt all Manner of Difficulties; for ſuch is a good Conſcience, and a well-grounded ed *Confidence towards God*, which is its inſeparable Attendant. 1 *Joh.* iii. 21.

3. The more a Man knows, and the better thoſe Subjects are, upon which his Studies have been employed; the heavier ſhall his Account be, unleſs his Piety and Virtue be proportionably eminent and exemplary. So little Reaſon have we to be exalted with our Attainments; and not rather to fear more, as we improve more in Knowledge. And what Improvements indeed can poſſibly be ſo great, as to juſtify our being proud of them? For no Man can ever want this Mortification of his Vanity, That what he knows is but a very little, in compariſon of what he ſtill continues ignorant of. Conſider this, and, inſtead of boaſting of thy Knowledge of a few Things, confeſs and be out of Countenance for the many more which thou doſt not underſtand. And why ſo forward to prefer thyſelf before others, when there are ſo many Perſons whoſe Learning, and Skill in the Rules of Living, give them an undoubted Right to be preferred before you? If you would attain to uſeful Learning indeed, learn to conceal your Attainments, and be content that the World ſhould think meanly of you. For Lowlineſs of Mind, and not thinking of a Man's ſelf *more highly than he ought to think*, is the moſt difficult, but withal the moſt profitable Leſſon; and the preferring others before ourſelves, is a Point of true Wiſdom and high Perfection. Nor ought our Opinions of this Kind to be changed, though we ſhould ſee another guilty of ſome egregious Folly, or very grievous Wickedneſs; ſince we ourſelves are Men of like Paſſions and Frailties; nor can we tell how long our own Virtue may continue unſhaken. Remember then, that Infirmities are common to all Mankind; and ſo remember it, as to perſuade yourſelf, or at leaſt to ſuſpect, that theſe are

dealt to Thee in as plentiful a Measure, as to any other Person whatsoever.

Chap. III.

The Doctrine of Truth.

BLessed is the Man, whom Truth condescends to teach; not by dark Figures, and Words quickly forgotten, but by a full and familiar Communication of itself. Happy should we be, could we but see Things as they are, free from the Errors of our fond Opinions, and the false Estimates we form from thence. How high a Value do we set upon the Knack of Distinguishing and Disputing nicely, in Matters hid from common Apprehensions; but Matters too, which to know nothing of will not render a Man's Case one whit the worse at the Day of Judgment? Egregious and elaborate Folly! which overlooks useful and necessary Points, as Things not worthy our Regard; and bends our Industry to find out those, which either turn to no Account, or what is worse than none. Thus taking Pains to be ignorant at last, and verifying in our ownselves, the Prophet's Description of the Heathen Idols, which *have Eyes*, and yet *see not*.

Psal. xciv. 12.

Psalm cxv.

Why should we then, with such eager Toil, strive to be Masters of logical Definitions? Or what do our abstracted Speculations profit us? He, whom the Divine Word instructs, takes a much shorter Cut to Truth: For, from this World alone, all saving Knowledge is derived, and without this no Man understands or judges aright. But he, who reduces all his Studies to, and governs himself by, this Rule, may

eſtabliſh his Mind in perfect Peace, and reſt himſelf ſecurely upon God. O Thou whoſe very Eſſence is Truth, unite me to thyſelf in perfect Love! The Variety of other Subjects tires and diſtracts my Soul; in Thee alone I find the Sum of all my Wiſhes and Deſires. Should all our Teachers be for ever dumb, and this great Volume of the Creatures continue ſhut to us, we might diſpenſe with all the reſt; if Thou would'ſt vouchſafe thy own Information, and teach us by Thyſelf.

The better acquainted any Man is with himſelf, the more he converſes with, and retires into his own Breaſt; and the leſs he wanders abroad, and dwells upon Things without him, the more extenſive and ſublime is his Knowledge, and the more eaſily attained. Becauſe this Man receives, and is directed by, a Ray darted from Heaven into his Soul. A Mind ſincere, and pure, and firm, is not diverted by Multiplicity of Objects. For the Honour of God is its conſtant Aim; and, having but one End to purſue, it is in perfect Peace and Unity with itſelf, and does not divide its Thoughts in Vanity and Self-love. For what can be a greater Hindrance than our own ambitious and ungovern'd Paſſion? A truly good and pious Man firſt orders and diſpoſes all his Buſineſs regularly, before he enters upon the Execution of any Deſign: He ſuffers no vicious Inclination to divert him, but makes every Undertaking ſubmit to the Dictates of Reaſon and Religion. The ſharpeſt as well as nobleſt Conflict is that, wherein we labour to gain a conqueſt over ourſelves; and this ſhould be our principal and conſtant Care, to get ground every Day, by bringing our Paſſions more and more under, and becoming more maſterly Proficients in Virtue and Goodneſs.

Nor may we ſuppoſe any Degree of Virtue ſo exalted, that it ſhould ceaſe to be a State of Proficiency; for ſuch is the Condition of Mortals, that their utmoſt

poſſible Perfection in this Life, is ever embaſed with an Allay of Imperfection; and their brighteſt Notions are clouded with ſome Confuſion and Obſcurity. But in the Study of ourſelves we are beſt capable of avoiding Miſtake. Therefore a true Senſe of what we are, and that Humility, which cannot but proceed from ſuch a Senſe, is a ſurer Way of bringing us to God, than the moſt laborious and profound Enquiries after Knowledge. Not that Learning is in its own Nature blameable; for the Underſtanding of any Thing whatſoever, conſidered ſimply, and as it really is, ought to be acknowledged commendable and good; the Gift and Ordinance of God. But the Danger is, when we give this the Precedence in our Eſteem, before Things abundantly better: I mean a good Conſcience, and a virtuous Converſation. The true Reaſon then why, in an Age where Learning is had in univerſal Admiration, ſo little Profit is made, and both Error and Vice do, notwithſtanding ſo wretchedly abound, is, in Truth, no other, than that Men generally miſtake their main Buſineſs and proper Excellence. Thy had rather cultivate their Parts than their Manners, and account it a greater Accompliſhment, to know much, than to live well.

Oh! would Men but beſtow half the Pains in rooting out Vice and planting Virtue in its ſtead, which they are content to throw away upon captious and unprofitable Queſtions, and the *Oppoſition of Science*, falſly ſo called; what a bleſſed Reformation ſhould we ſee? Then would not the Vulgar, and meaner Sort, abandon themſelves to ſuch ſcandalous, brutiſh, and abominable Wickedneſs. Nor would the Men of Senſe and Learning, and Quality, continue ſo profligate and diſſolute in their Manners, and blemiſh, as they do, their Honour and Attainments, with ſhameleſs and licentious Impurities. Surely this could not be, did Men but conſider at all, that

1 *Tim.* iv. 20.

that a Day of Judgment there will come, wherein Measures will be taken very different from ours; when the Enquiry, upon which our Affairs must all turn, will be, not how much we have Heard or Read, but how much we have Done; not how Eloquent our Expressions, but how Pure and Devout our Lives; how much our Manners, not our Capacity or Breeding, our Wit or Rhetorick, distinguished us from common Men. But, if the Credit and Honour of the Thing were the only Consideration; yet even thus, Where is the Fruit of all this mighty Toil? What is become of all the Eminent Divines, Philosophers, Lawyers, Orators, Persons celebrated far and near just at the Time when they lived and flourished? but now somebody else enjoys the Gains of all that Learning and Fatigue; and, 'tis odds, whether he that lives upon their Labours, even so much as sends one Thought after them. These Men, so eminent in their respective Professions, no doubt, thought themselves considerable in their own Time; but now that Time is gone, and they are lost in universal Silence. Their very Names are buried as deep as their Bodies; and the one was scarce sooner out of Sight, than the other out of all Mention and Remembrance.

Ah, wretched Men! How have you been deluded? How short and withering a Good does that Fame and Reputation prove, which you vainly promised yourselves would be eternal; always fresh and flourishing, always precious in the Mouths and Memories of Posterity? But this, and no better, is the Condition of all worldly Honour. Oh! had you but been equally careful to improve in Piety, and rendered your Virtues as eminent as your Learning, your Studies then had not been fruitless; but followed with a Recompence, which would not thus have forsaken you. But this is the fatal Error of our Age, that infinite Numbers are destroyed by unprofitable Knowledge. They lay

themſelves out upon Subtilties and Curioſities, which turn to no Account; and the only Thing which can make them amends at laſt, Religion and the Service of God, that they gave themſelves no manner of Trouble about, but ſlight, as not worth their Care or Thought. The great Occaſion of the fantaſtical Opinions and dangerous Corruptions, with which the World is peſter'd, is certainly this, that Men propoſe no End to their Studies but to be great, and to have other People think as highly of them as they do of themſelves. And, becauſe of all Things, they deteſt Humility, and a Submiſſion to Truth; God gives them the due Reward of their Vanity, and ſuffers them to be ſeduced by their own Abſurdities and *Imaginations*. If then we would be Great, let us take the proper Courſe for it: For none is truly ſo, but he that abounds in the Love of God, and in Good Works; None is truly ſo, but he, who thinks modeſtly of himſelf, and is got above the Temptations of Ambition and Vain-glory. The Man, who is wiſe to purpoſe, counts all that this World can boaſt of, but *Droſs and Dung*, *that he may win Chriſt*. And he is an expert and learned Man indeed, who hath learnt to give the Preference to God's Will, before his own; who reſolutely complies with his Commands, and as reſolutely denies his own Inclinations.

Rom. i. 21.

Phil. iii. 8.

CHAP.

Chap. IV.

Prudence in our behaviour.

Be not too hasty in believing every Word, nor the Suggestions of *every Spirit*; but consider coolly and leisurely, and make a Conscience of giving your Credit with due Caution. Men are much more prone (the greater is the Pity) both to speak and believe Ill, than Well, of their Neighbours. This is our Infirmity and Unhappiness: But a good Man will consider and make Allowances for it. And the Effect of this Consideration will be, the suspending his Assent, and neither believing all he hears, nor officiously reporting all he believes. *Prov.* xiv. 15. 1 *John* iv. 1. *Eccluſ.* xix. 5.

It is an Argument of great Wisdom, to do nothing rashly; nor to be obstinate and inflexible in our Opinions. And the Cautiousness I just now recommended, in crediting and spreading Reports, is a necessary Branch of the same Perfection. Advise in your Affairs with wise and good Men; and think it more for your Reputation, to be instructed by those who understand better, than to act upon your own Head. A Virtuous Life makes a Man prudent in God's Esteem, and gives true Conduct and Experience. The more humble and observant we are to his Directions, the better we shall behave ourselves, and the greater Satisfaction and Peace of Mind we shall find resulting from all we do. *Eccl.* xix. 24.

Chap. V.

Of Reading the Holy Scriptures.

THE End we ſhould propoſe to ourſelves in this Study, is the diſcerning and Diſcovery of Truth, not the obſerving Quaintneſs and Propriety of Expreſſion. The Book of God indeed ſhould be peruſed with the ſame Spirit and Temper by which it was dictated. And as the Holy Ghoſt intended the Profit of Mankind more than Niceneſs of Words and Phraſes, ſo ſhould we aim at growing better Livers, rather than wiſer, or more accurate Speakers, by what he hath delivered. To Perſons thus diſpoſed, the plaineſt and moſt pious Parts of Scripture will miniſter a Delight equal to thoſe which are more myſterious and ſublime. The Authority and Skill of the Penman ſhould be of little Weight with us. Nor matters it, whether he were one of great or mean Attainments; for the Love and Deſire of Truth is the proper Motive to Study; and the Subſtance of what is ſpoken, not the Perſon who ſpeaks, ought principally to be conſidered. *All fleſh is graſs, but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever*; and this Word ſpeaks to us in different Manners, without any partial Reſpect of Perſons.

Rom. xv. 4. 1 *Cor.* ii. 1,4.

1 *Pet.* i. 24,25.

One great Inconvenience in Reading the Scriptures, is our own vain Curioſity. We loſe much of the Benefit which might otherwiſe be gathered from them by pretending to nice Diſquiſitions of difficult Points, and labouring to bring to the Standard of our own imperfect Reaſon, what we ſhould be content to receive with the Simplicity of an humble Obedience, and place to the Account of Divine Faith. If you would Read them, and profit by that Reading, you

must do it with a submissive and humble, a sincere and teachable Disposition of Mind; and account it a greater Excellence to believe what God hath said, than to affect the Reputation of Learning, by Singularity of Opinions, and a bold Attempt to bring down all he says to your own Comprehension. If in some Things you find Occasion to doubt or distrust your own Judgment, consult wise and holy Persons, and submit patiently to hear and be informed by them. Nor let a vain Conceit of your own Abilities produce Contempt of the Aphorisms and Parables of the Ancients. For, be well assured they were not uttered at all Adventures; but they, who delivered these proverbial Sentences, knew them to be the Result of long and judicious Observation. *Eccluſ.* viii. 8, 9.

Chap. VI.

Of Inordinate Affections.

THE Moment a Man cherishes any immoderate Desire, he feels a Tempest rising in his Soul. Pride and Covetousness never suffer us to rest; but the Poor and Lowly in Heart, the Humble and the Contented, enjoy themselves in a profound and perpetual Calm. He that is still in Conflict with his Passions, and hath not yet attained a compleat Victory over them, is easily tempted, and often finds himself overborne by Things not worth his Concern. For the Remains of a Carnal Spirit, and the strong Tendencies to Pleasures of Sense, will not suffer a Man, without great Difficulty, to draw his Mind off from worldly Affections. And therefore, while he is endeavouring to do this, he endeavours it with sore Travail and Pain; commits a Violence upon himself, and is provoked

voked to Anger and Indignation againſt all that oppoſes him in ſo laborious an Undertaking.

But if he indulge thoſe Deſires, and ſucceed in them, the Conſequence is worſe this Way, than the other. For then he is ſtung with Remorſe for his guilty Compliance, and diſcontented to find, that the Gratifying his Inclination does not yield the Satisfaction he promiſed himſelf from it. This convinces him by ſad Experience, that true Peace and Content is never to be had by obeying his Appetites, but by an obſtinate Reſiſtance of them. And ſuch Peace cannot be expected in the Breaſt of any Senſual Man; for it is the peculiar Portion and Happineſs of a Soul raiſed above the World, a zealous and devout, a mortified and refined, and heavenly Diſpoſition of Spirit.

Chap. VII.

Directions for avoiding Pride, and vain Confidences.

TO put our Truſt in Man, or any other Creature, is moſt egregious Vanity. Think it not below you, to ſubmit to the meaneſt good Offices for the Service of your Brethren, and the Sake of Jeſus Chriſt; nor count it any Shame to be thought Poor and Mean in this World. Do your own Endeavour honeſtly, and faithfully; and never doubt of God's Aſſiſtance. Depend not upon your own Wiſdom, and place not any Confidence in the greateſt Man living; but let your whole Truſt reſt entirely upon the Favour of God, who bringeth down and *reſiſteth the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble, and exalteth thoſe* who are content to *abaſe themſelves.*

Jer. xvii. 5.

1 *Pet.* iv. 5. *Luke* i. 52. xiv. 11.

Boaſt

Boaſt not of Riches, becauſe they are in your preſent Poſſeſſion; nor of Friends, becauſe they have Power and Intereſt; but if you will glory, glory in God, who is able to give all Things, and willing to give that which is better than all, even Himſelf. And why ſhould the Strength and Beauty of your Perſon puff you up with Pride, when it is in the Power of a very little Sickneſs, to bring upon you extreme Weakneſs, and odious Deformity? If you be inclined to value your Wit and Addreſs above due Meaſure, remember from what Hand theſe come, and do not provoke the Giver, by abuſing the Gift.

Fancy not yourſelf better than your Neighbours, for fear that God, who knows what is in every Man, think the worſe of you upon that Account. Nay, value not yourſelf even for what you have done well, for God judgeth not as Man judgeth; and what we often are highly ſatisfied with, he ſometimes thinks not fit ſo much as to approve. If you be conſcious of any thing good in yourſelf, think that the ſame, or better Qualities, may likewiſe be found in others: For while you allow their Excellencies, it will be no difficult Matter to preſerve a modeſt Opinion of your own. There can come no Harm of ſuppoſing every other Man better than yourſelf; but the ſuppoſing any Man worſe than yourſelf, may be attended with very ill Conſequences. *The Meek*, ſays the Scripture, *is refreſhed in the Multitude of Peace*; but the Proud in Spirit is *like a troubled Sea*, perpetually toſt and driven by the fierce Commotions of Anger, and Emulation, and Envy, and Diſdain, which never ſuffer him to be eaſy and compoſed. *Pſal.* xxxvii. *Iſa.* lvii.

CHAP.

Chap. VIII.

Againſt too general an Acquaintance, and inconvenient Freedoms in Converſation.

Eccluſ. viii. 19.

OPEN not thine Heart to every Man, but make Choice of prudent and religious Perſons to diſcloſe thy Affairs to. Frequent not the Company of young Men and Strangers; flatter not the Rich, neither affect to be ſeen in the Preſence of great Men: But aſſociate thyſelf with the Devout, the Virtuous, the Humble; and contrive that thy Diſcourſe be profitable. Deſire not the intimate Acquaintance of Women; but, inſtead of thy Converſation, let them have thy Prayers; and recommend the Preſervation and the Reward of their Virtue to God. Converſe as much as may be with God, with his holy Angels, with thy own Conſcience; and complain not for Want of Company, nor think it an Unhappineſs to have but few Acquaintance, when thou haſt ſo good Company as this always at hand.

Our Charity indeed ſhould be univerſal, and extend to all Mankind; but it is by no Means convenient, our Friendſhips and Familiarities ſhould do ſo too. We often find, that a Perſon altogether unknown to us, comes recommended by a good Character, which makes us paſſionately fond of his Acquaintance, and yet this very Man, when better known, loſes the great Opinion we conceived of him before, and grows palled and flat upon our Hands. And this we may be ſure is no leſs likely to prove our own Caſe: For the Perſons, with whom we hope to ingratiate ourſelves by a freer Acquaintance, frequently diſcover ſome ill Quality in us, which makes us leſs acceptable. And, therefore, in Prudence and Tenderneſs to ourſelves, and others both, we ſhould be ſparing in our Intimacies;

cies; becauſe it ſo very often happens, that the more perfectly Men are underſtood, the leſs they are eſteemed.

Chap. IX.

Obedience and a State of Subjection.

It is a very valuable Advantage to live under the Direction of a Superior; and whatever the Generality of Men think of the Matter, more difficult and hazardous to Command than to Obey. Many ſubmit more out of Neceſſity, than out of any Principle of Duty or Choice; and, to ſuch as theſe, this is a State of continual Torment. All they do is againſt the Grain, attended with conſtant Murmurings and Complaints; the Life of Slaves and Brutes, and not of Man, who ſhould act with a Spirit of Freedom. And this Native Liberty no Inferior attains to, till he has learnt to obey heartily, for God's, and Conſcience-ſake. Whatever Poſt you form an Idea of, none will give you Quiet and Inward Content, equal with that of a State of Subjection: Many have fed themſelves with fond Imaginations, how happy they ſhould be, if they could change their Condition for a higher; but few, if any, who have actually made the Experiment, have found themſelves at all the happier or eaſier for it.

'Tis true, indeed, every Man's own Judgment is the proper Rule and Meaſure of his Actions; and hence it comes to paſs, that we are all beſt affected to them who are of the ſame Opinion with ourſelves. But 'tis as true, that if God rule in our Hearts, we ſhall not think much to recede from our own Senſe in ſome Caſes, when Peace and the publick Good may be promoted

moted by such Concessions. For who is absolutely and compleatly Wise, that nothing escapes his Knowledge? If then our Knowledge be but partial and imperfect, 'tis but reasonable we should not abound too much in our own Sense, but allow a fair Hearing, at least to those who differ from us. And, in such Cases, a Man gains a great Point, when he knows himself in the right, and yet in Tenderness and Charity, can comply with the Infirmities or Mistakes of others, rather than offend God, by being too tenacious of his own better Judgment.

I have frequently been told, That it is much safer to take Advice, than to give it. For a Man may have considered and determined well; and yet there may be some Cases, which may make it reasonable to depart from that Determination, and give ourselves up to be determined by other Persons. And when these Cases happen, To refuse such Compliances, manifestly betrays our own Self-conceit, and is not Constancy but Obstinacy of Spirit.

Chap. X.

Few Words are best.

Decline Crowds and Company as much as conveniently you may. For frequent Discourse, even of News or indifferent Things, which happens upon such Occasions, is sometimes an Obstruction to Virtue, when least intended or suspected so to be. The World and its Vanities easily take hold of us, and our Minds are ensnared and captivated, before we are aware. How often have I found Reason to wish, that I had not been in Company, or that I had said nothing, when I was there? If we examine, how it comes to pass, that

that Mutual Converſation gives ſo great Delight, notwithſtanding we ſo ſeldom enjoy that Pleaſure with perfect Innocence; the true Account, I think, is this, That we find ourſelves diverted by Diſcourſe, and unbend our Thoughts from ſeverer Studies: That what we deſire and are moſt fond of, or what we have the greateſt Averſion to, lies uppermoſt in our Minds; and therefore we propoſe ſome Eaſe in diſcharging ourſelves upon theſe Subjects.

But how very ſeldom do we find that Eaſe we propoſe by doing ſo? For this outward Conſolation mightily takes off from that inward and ſpiritual Satisfaction, in which true Happineſs conſiſts. Therefore it is our Duty to Watch and Pray, and to fill up the empty Spaces of Life, with theſe holy and retired Exerciſes. And, if at any Time, the Refreſhments of Company be choſen, and convenient; a ſtrict Guard ſhould be ſet upon our Tongues, that they utter nothing amiſs; but improve theſe very Diverſions to the Edification of ourſelves, and them that hear us. Impertinent and laviſh Talking is in itſelf a very vicious Habit, and a wretched Hindrance to our Spiritual Proficiency. And theſe two Conſiderations ought to make us extremely cautious in our Converſation. But it is the Privilege of Virtuous and Religious Diſcourſe, that Piety and Goodneſs are wonderfully promoted by ſuch Conferences; and then, eſpecially, when Perſons of the like Heavenly Spirit and Temper frequent one another's Company, with a Deſign of improving by it.

Chap. XI.

Of Peace of Mind, and a Desire of Improvement.

MEN might live quiet and easy enough, if they would be careful not to give themselves Trouble, and forbear meddling with what other People do and say, in which they are no Way concerned. But how should he be easy, who makes other Mens Cares his own? who industriously seeks Disquiet, and when he might rest in Peace within Doors, goes abroad to invite and fetch Disturbance home to his House; who takes such Pains, and spends so much Time to enquire into the Affairs of Neighbours and Strangers altogether foreign to him; and seldom or never descends into his own Breast, that he may examine and understand himself. *Blessed are the Meek*, says the Scripture, *for they shall inherit the Earth peaceably, and increase their Joy in the Lord.*

Matth. v. 5. *Isa.* xxix. 19.

Whence is it, think you, that some holy Persons can so perfectly abstract themselves from the Concerns of this World, and find such Satisfaction in their divine Retirements and solitary Contemplations? From hence, no doubt; that they have made it their Business to mortify all earthly and sensual Affections, and so have devoted themselves entirely to God, and are at Liberty to attend upon Him without Distraction. But we find the Case much otherwise with us, because our Passions interrupt our Piety, and the transitory Things of this World continue tenderly to affect us. We seldom gain an entire Conquest over any one ill Habit; nor are we zealous to make every Day we live a Step to higher Degrees of Virtue. This is the Reason why we are so cold and insensible, or at best but lukewarm and indifferent, in the Exercises of Piety and private Meditation.

Were

Were we but, as we ought to be, dead to the World and our own Lusts, disentangled from those Chains and Snares within, that hamper and keep our Souls down to Matter and Sense; then should we also relish Acts of Devotion, and be ravished with marvellous Joy, when our Thoughts are fixed on God and Heaven. The only, or the greatest Bar to these Spiritual Delights, proceeds from Passions unsubdued; and from our own Sloth, which cares not to encounter Difficulties, nor aspires to the Perfection of the Saints. Hence is that Tameness and Dejection of Spirit, so visible, so scandalous, when any little Misfortune comes across us: Hence our vain Confidence, and anxious Care, which seeks and depends upon human Helps and Remedies; and neglects God, our only sufficient Refuge and Deliverer.

Would we but quit ourselves like Men, and resolutely stand our Ground, we should not fail of Succours from above. God is always ready to strengthen those who strive lawfully, and place their Hope in the Assistance of his heavenly Grace: He means our very Hardships and Dangers for our Good; and engages us in new Conflicts and Temptations, that he may make our Victories more glorious, and qualify us for a brighter Crown. If we content ourselves with the Observance of the outward Duties only, and suppose this is the utmost Perfection necessary for us; we bring Religion into a very narrow Compass, and may quickly get to the End of it. But, alas! the main of our Business lies within: The Ax must be laid to the Root of the Tree, and our Sensual Appetites quite cut down, before we can attain to true Pleasure in Holiness, and a Peaceful Serenity of Mind.

Would we but impose upon ourselves the Task of mortifying a fresh Lust, and conquering a vicious Habit every Year; even thus in a little Time we might attain to some Perfection. But, alas! we often take the

direct contrary Course; and are generally more wary, more devout, more zealous to do well, and to avoid Evil, when we first enter upon a Religious Life, than after we have spent some Time in it. The Fervour of our Affection, which ought in Reason to grow every Day stronger and brighter, cools and goes out again; and we reckon it a great Matter, if our Zeal can be kept up to the same Warmth, which we felt at its first kindling. We are too tender of our Ease, and loth to put ourselves upon the Stretch: Whereas, would we but use a little Severity, and submit to some Violence at first, that Trouble would quickly wear off; and all our Progress in Virtue would prove, not easy and tolerable only, but even a Delight, and wonderful Satisfaction to us.

'Tis hard, I own, to part with our old Friends, and to unlearn Habits to which we have been long accustomed. And harder yet it is, to enter into a formal War with our own Inclinations, and obstinately to deny what we eagerly desire. But if we do not conquer smaller Difficulties, what will become of us when assaulted by greater? If we do not resist our natural Propensions at first, before Inclination is strengthened by Custom, the Enemy will gather Strength. Every Day's Practice is a fresh Reinforcement; and the longer the Delay, the greater will be the Difficulty. O think of this in Time, and consider the happy Effects of an early and serious Piety: What Peace, what Triumphs to yourselves; what Joy to others, to God and Christ, to Angels and good Men, you will certainly procure, by behaving yourselves gallantly in this Spiritual Warfare. This sure will balance all the Hardships of Virtue, reproach your Cowardice and Sloth, provoke and inflame your Diligence and Courage; and make you zealous, resolute, impatient to grow in Grace, and advance every Day in Spiritual Perfection.

Chap. XII.

The Advantage of Afflictions.

IT is good for me that I have been in Trouble, says *David*. Nor is it *David*'s Case alone; for many Men have Reason to bless that Providence, which sends Crosses and Calamities upon them. These bring a Man's Thoughts home, put him upon Reflection, and help him to understand himself and his Condition. They shew him, that he is in a State of Exile and Pilgrimage, and forbid him to set up his Hope and Rest in a strange Country, where he is no better than a Sojourner. *Psal.* cxix. 71.

Nor is it thus with those Sufferings alone, which the immediate Hand of Heaven inflicts; but even those whereof Men are the Instruments. The Injuries and contumelious Usage, the Calumnies and Censures of them who speak and think Ill of us, bring their Profit with them too, even when most wrongful, most undeserved. For these oftentimes are an occasion of rectifying our Measures, as bringing us to a juster and more modest Opinion of ourselves. They cure our Ambition and Vain-glory, and convince us how vain a Thing it is, to thirst after Reputation and the Praise of Men, when even Innocence and Goodness cannot protect us from Slander and Reproaches. They teach us to set a due Value upon the Testimony of our own Consciences, and the righteous Approbation of God, the Searcher of Hearts; when That, which he will not fail to commend and reward, cannot escape the Contempt and Condemnation of the World, nor prevail for so much as fair Quarter, from our mistaken and injurious Brethren.

It is therefore both our Duty and our Wisdom, so entirely to place our Happiness and Expectations in

God alone; that we shall not need to be extremely solicitous for many outward Comforts, or feel ourselves destitute, or much dejected, when any of these happen to fail or forsake us. For, when a well-disposed Man is oppressed with Sufferings and Temptations, or perplexed with evil Thoughts, he then feels, experimentally, how necessary the divine Assistance is, and how little he is able to do or endure without it: Then he is touched with inward Remorse, then does he groan in secret, and, in the Anguish of his Heart, pour out his Requests for Relief and Deliverance: Then even Life itself becomes a Burthen, and Death desirable; as that which will translate him from this Valley of Tears and Corruption, to a Life of Immortality with his God and Redeemer. In a Word, such Circumstances as these are more effectual than ten thousand Arguments, to convince him, by his own sensible Experience, that perfect Security, and entire Satisfaction are not so much as consistent with the Condition of Man in this present World; and therefore we must be content to wait another and Future State, which alone deserves our Affections, because it alone can make us truly and completely happy.

Chap. XIII.

Of Resisting Temptations.

SO long as we continue in this World, we must not flatter ourselves with an Imagination so vain, as that of being exempted from Tribulations and Trials. These are so inseparable from Mortality, that *Job* calls the Life of Man a *Warfare*, or *Place of Exercise*. It highly concerns every one of us upon this Account, to take great Care

Job vii. 1. *See* lxx. E vulg.

Care for managing himself under his Temptations; to watch and pray diligently; as being duly sensible that he hath a watchful Enemy to deal with, one who will not fail to take all Advantages of deceiving, and who *goes about continually, seeking whom he may devour.* Nor must our Attainments in Virtue dispose us to remit of this Care, for Virtue is no absolute Security. No Man is so perfect, so holy, as never to be assaulted, or out of the Reach of this Adversary. We may defend ourselves against his Attacks, but still attack'd we must, and most certainly shall be.

1 *Pet.* v. 8.

Now tho' there be great Hazard and Uneasiness, yet is there likewise great Profit to be made from Temptations. Particularly, as they contribute to the humbling our Minds, to the purging off our Dross, and the making us wiser by suffering. This is the rough Way to Happiness, which all the Saints of God have travelled before us, and by it at last were safe conducted to their Journey's End: And they who fell off and were discouraged at the Ruggedness of the Passage, are all Reprobates and Cast-aways. No Order or Profession of Men is so sacred, no Place so remote or solitary, but that Temptations and Troubles will find them out and intrude upon them.

Nor ought it to seem strange, that these should haunt and pursue us close, at all Times and Places; since we ourselves carry about us the very Matter of our Temptations, and can never run away from that inborn Concupiscence, upon which they work, and from whence they take Occasion to destroy us. This is the Account we may reasonably give ourselves, why there should be such an uninterrupted Succession of Temptations and Miseries, and why one Trouble should press so hard upon the Heels of another. For how indeed can it be otherwise; since with our Innocence we lost our Safety and Happiness, and must be born to

Trouble, becauſe the Ground of our Trouble is now become a Part of our Nature? Many Men involve themſelves deeper in Temptations, by being too ſolicitous to decline them. For we muſt not ſuppoſe ourſelves always to have conquered a Temptation, when we have fled from it. The nobler, and ſometimes the more effectual Way, is to vanquiſh them by patient enduring, and being humbled under them.

Thus much is plain; That by declining a Temptation we have not diſarmed it. The Root is ſtanding ſtill, and will ſoon be ſprouting again; and a Man who flees, is ſo far from getting Ground upon his Adverſary, that he rather gives him Encouragement to purſue more vigorouſly. The Way to overcome is by Patience and Long-ſuffering; which, by God's Aſſiſtance, and, by Degrees, tho' perhaps but ſlow ones, is more likely to ſucceed, than Heat, and Vehemence, and any the violenteſt and moſt obſtinate Efforts of our own Strength. When you find yourſelf tempted, be ſure to aſk Advice; and when you ſee another ſo, deal with him gently; ſupport him with Compaſſion, and adminiſter all the Comfort in your Power, as you could not but wiſh to be treated yourſelf, were you in his afflicted Circumſtances.

The Beginning of all Temptations to Wickedneſs, is the Fickleneſs of our own Mind, and Want of Truſt in God. An inconſtant and irreſolute Man is like a Ship without a Pilot, driven to and fro, at the Mercy of every Guſt of Wind. *Metals are tried in the Fire, and Acceptable Men in the Furnace of Affliction.* We ſeldom know the true Extent of our own Power, till Temptation diſcover it to us. But Watchfulneſs, which is always neceſſary, is chiefly ſo when the firſt Aſſaults are made. For the Enemy is more eaſily repulſed, if we never ſuffer him to get within us, but upon the very firſt Approach draw up our Forces, and fight him without the Gate. 'Twas well adviſed of the Poet,

Eccluſ. ii. 5.

Take

Take Phyſick early; Med'cines come too late
When the Diſeaſe is grown inveterate.

Ovid. Principiis obſta, ſero Medicina paratur. Cum mala per longas invaluere moras.

And this will be more manifeſt, if we obſerve, by what Methods and Degrees Temptations grow upon us. The firſt Thing that preſents itſelf to the Mind, is a plain ſingle Thought; This ſtraight is improved into a ſtrong Imagination; That again enforced by a ſenſible Delight; then follow evil Motions; and when theſe are once ſtirred, there remains nothing but the Aſſent of the Will, and then the Work is finiſhed. Now the firſt Steps of this are ſeldom thought worth our Care; ſometimes not taken Notice of; ſo that the Enemy frequently is got cloſe up to us, and even within our Trenches, before we obſerve him; and we have loſt the Day, for Want of defending ourſelves, while he was in a Condition of being reſiſted. For the longer we defer the Engagement, the weaker we grow, and the more our Adverſary gathers Strength.

The Seaſon of theſe Trials is various and uncertain. Upon ſome they are ſeverer preſently after their Converſion, upon others towards the latter End of their Days. Some have them ſo thick repeated, that their whole Life is one continued Conflict; and ſome again have but very few and gentle Trials. All which different Caſes are ordered by a Juſt and Wiſe God, who knows what each Man deſerves, and what he is qualified to undergo; and weighs all Circumſtances ſo juſtly, that his ſeveral Diſpenſations are conſtantly ſubſervient to the Salvation and Happineſs of his choſen Servants.

Let us not therefore deſpair, when Temptations beſet us; but excite our Zeal, and pray to God more fervently, that he would be our preſent Help and

Refuge in all our Troubles; and, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *That he would with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it. Let us humble ourſelves* under *the trying Hand of God*, and patiently ſubmit to his good Pleaſure in all our Tribulations. For thoſe who do ſo *he will exalt in due time*, and *ſave them that be of a meek and a contrite Spirit.*

1 *Cor.* x. 13.
1 *Pet.* iv.
Pſalm xxxiv.

By Temptations and Afflictions a Man is brought (as it were) to the Touch; by theſe his Proficiency is meaſured, and eaſily diſcernable. The greater theſe are, the more acceptable the Sufferer is to God, and the brighter Luſtre they add to his Virtue. For, to be Religious and Zealous in the Service of God, when no Uneaſineſs is upon us; This is no mighty Matter. But if we can ſuffer with Patience and Reſignation, and continue ſteady in the Love and Service of God, when he afflicts and ſends Bitterneſs into our Souls, this argues a noble Diſpoſition, and promiſes an extraordinary Perfection. Some Perſons have come off with Safety and Honour in very ſharp and trying Inſtances, and yet are worſted in common and trivial ones. And this Caſe is capable of a very good Improvement: For thus, no doubt, God gives Men Warning, that they ſhould not preſume upon their own Strength, but humbly take Sanctuary in Him, in Matters of Difficulty; moved by the Experience of that Weakneſs, and Frailty, which hath yielded to ſlighter and leſs violent Temptations.

Chap. XIV.

Against Rash Judging.

TURN your Eyes inward upon yourself; for you can very hardly exceed in judging your own Actions, nor be too cautious and sparing in censuring those of others. And *Censuring* indeed this deserves to be called in the worst Sense of the Word, rather than *Judging*; if we consider, not only how unprofitable to any good End, but how liable to infinite Mistakes, and very often how exceeding sinful, all such Judgments are. Whereas the Examining and Judging our ownselves is a Work very proper for us; such as we are qualified to undertake, and always turns to good Account. We generally determine and give Sentence, just as we stand affected to Persons and Things; our own Passions and private Prepossessions blind our Minds, and either hinder us from discerning the Truth, or from letting it have its due Weight with us. Whereas if we proceed from no other Principle but the Love of God, those Matters, which disagree with our own Sense of Things, would be allowed fairer Consideration, and be less uneasy to us.

But now something foreign to the Case in hand, either lurking privately in our own Breast, or happening from without, engages and draws our Minds after it. Many People act upon private Respects and personal Interests, even when least sensible that they do so. These Men continue well satisfied, so long as Things agree with their own Inclination; but are out of all Patience, upon the least Difference and Contradiction. And hence it comes to pass, that good Correspondence is so often broke, and Quarrels commenced between Friends and Neighbours, even Men of Piety and the most Sacred Professions, upon no other Ground, than that they do not think and act alike.

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The Reaſon of this ſeems to be that mighty Aſcendant, which Uſe and inveterate Habits naturally gain upon us. We can very hardly be perſuaded to change a Practice or Opinion, which we have been educated in, and long accuſtomed to; or to ſuppoſe, that other Men ſee farther into Things than ourſelves. The Man therefore, who leans more to his own Underſtanding and Study, than to that Principle of Virtue, which ſhould diſpoſe him to an entire Submiſſion to Chriſt and his Doctrine, is, by no Means, in a Condition of having his Mind enlightened by God. For God expects that we ſhould be ſubject to Him without any Reſerves, and thinks it fit, that a Religious Love and Obedience ſhould take Place of our own Reaſonings.

Chap. XV.

Of Works of Charity.

THIS is a conſtant and univerſal Rule, That no Conſideration of any Advantage, no Regard of any Perſon whatſoever, muſt ever prevail with us to do an Ill Thing. But the Benefit of a Perſon, who ſtands in Need of our Relief, is oftentimes a ſufficient Warrant for leaving a good Thing undone; or for changing our Meaſures, and chuſing to do one good Thing rather than another. For, indeed, properly ſpeaking, this is not ſo much an omitting to do well, as a prudent Contrivance to do better. But, let the Thing we do be what it will, it is the Principle upon which we do it, that muſt recommend it: And, as without Charity, both all we are, and all we do, ſignify nothing; ſo, where this is at the Bottom, every Thing

Thing we do, how mean ſoever in itſelf, is of very valuable Conſideration. For God obſerves by what Springs we are moved; and meaſures our Deſert by the Diſpoſition of the Heart, and not by the Worth of the Gift, or the Quality of the Action.

The Man then, that loves a great deal, does a great deal; the Man that does any thing well, in that one Thing does a great deal: And he does well, who prefers the Good of others before his own private Pleaſure or Profit. That which frequently paſſes for Charity, is really no better than a ſelfiſh and carnal Principle. For how very ſeldom do Men act upon other Motives, than the gratifying their own Inclinations, the doing their own Will, the proſpect of their own Advantage, the Expectation of Return or Reward; ſo conſulting the Convenience, not ſo much of others, as themſelves?

Now true and perfect *Charity ſeeks not its own Advantage*; and if God, in his Bounty, be pleaſed to recompenſe it, yet this Recompence is not the Thing principally in View, but its great Aim and End is the Glory of God. For the ſame Reaſon *Charity envieth not*; becauſe Envy is a Paſſion proceeding from Selfiſhneſs and Pride. And therefore the Man, who acts upon a Principle ſo generous, as neither to ſeek his own private Intereſt, nor to take Satisfaction in himſelf, but places all his Content and Bliſs in God alone, is got above Envy, and incapable of ſo mean a Paſſion. Charity looks upon God as the ſole Beginning and End of all Good; the Source, from whence it flows, and the immenſe Ocean, in which it is ſwallowed up; the Perſon from whom all the Saints derive their Righteouſneſs, and in the Fruition of whom the Reward of their Righteouſneſs conſiſts. And therefore the Man poſſeſs'd of this Principle ſets no undue Value upon himſelf or others; He takes no Part of the Merit or Honour to himſelf; He is

1 *Cor.* xiii.

not

not profuſe in the Commendation of others; but aſcribes the whole Glory of every Virtuous Action to Him, whoſe originally and in Truth it is. Little need be ſaid, to ſhew, that one thus diſpoſed, thus perſuaded of God, as the Only, the Univerſal Good, muſt have ſet his Heart upon Things above. For ſure the leaſt Spark of his Holy Fire will ſerve to kindle in our Breaſts the Love of Heaven and Spiritual Joys; and ſuffice to convince us that all here below is full of Vanity, and by no Means an Object worthy our Affections.

Chap. XVI.

Of Bearing with other Mens Faults.

WHEN you obſerve in yourſelf, or others, any Thing amiſs, which you would fain, but cannot cure, your Duty in ſuch Caſes is to endure it, till God ſees fit to order Matters otherwiſe. And a Duty this is highly reaſonable, if you conſider, that poſſibly it is much wiſer and better, that theſe Faults ſhould not be amended, than that they ſhould. It may be, God permits them for the Trial and Increaſe of your Patience and Humility, without which all our Virtues are of no great Regard in his Sight. But at the ſame Time that you ought to bear, you are no leſs obliged to pray againſt them; to beg that the ill Example of them may be no Hindrance to you in your Chriſtian Courſe; and to implore the Aſſiſtance of his Grace, for the bearing them in ſuch a Manner, that the Provocations ariſing thence may never ſhake your Temper, or betray you to any ſinful, or ſo much as indecent, Exceſs of Paſſion.

If a Man refuse to comply with good Advice, or to reform upon Admonitions and Reproofs; you are not, after these Offers of doing him Service have been made and repeated, obliged to contend with him any longer. 'Tis better to commit the whole Affair to God, and endeavour to effect that by your Prayers, which your Discourses could not do. Beseech Him therefore, whose Infinite Wisdom knows how to bring Good out of Evil, that his Will may be done, and his Name glorified; and that all who Serve and Worship him, may be led into such Actions, as most contribute to these Ends, and are well pleasing in his Sight. And when you have thus discharged Your Part, set yourself resolutely to bear the greatest Infirmities and Faults of your Brethren without any Disturbance. And, for confirming this Resolution, remember, that You also have many Failings of your own, by which the Patience of other People will have its turn of being exercised. And if you do (as certainly you cannot but) see this, think how unreasonable it is, to expect you should make others in all Particulars, what you would have Them to be; when you cannot so much as make yourself what you are sensible you ought to be. And, indeed, nothing is more common, than to express exceeding Zeal in amending our Neighbours, and mighty Indignation against their Vices or Imperfections; while at the same time we neglect the beginning at Home, and either quite overlook, or seem highly contented with our own.

We take a pleasure in being severe upon others, but cannot endure to hear of our own Faults. We are surprized and uneasy at the Liberties they take with us, and wonder with what Confidence they can pretend such Interest in us; and yet there is nothing so extravagant, which we do not think we have a Right to expect, and resent it highly to be denied. We set up for Reformers, declaim at the Wickedness of the Age, and

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are all for suppressing and punishing it by rigorous Laws; and yet are unwilling that any Check or Restraint should be put upon our own Freedoms. This shews, how far we are from observing that great Rule of Equity, the Loving our Neighbour as ourselves; and from meting to Others the same measure, which we are content should be measured to Us again.

Further yet, Supposing all Men to be without Faults, some Excellencies and Virtues must be lost too: What would become of Patience, what of Forgiving and Forbearing one another for Christ's sake, if there were no Provocations to try our Temper? And such there could not be, if every Man were perfect, and did his Duty. But, as the present Condition of the World is ordered, God hath furnished us with constant Occasions of bearing one another's Burthens. For there is no Man lives without his Failings; no Man that is so happy as never to give Offence; no Man without his Load of Trouble; no Man so sufficient, as never to need Assistance; none so wise, but the Advice of others may, at some time or other, be useful and necessary for him: And therefore we should think ourselves under the strongest Engagements to comfort, and relieve, and instruct, and admonish, and bear with one another. Besides, we shall do well to reflect, that Afflictions and uneasy Accidents are the clearest Indication of a Man's Goodness, and the Degrees of his Improvement. For we mistake extremely, in imagining, that any thing which happens to us from without, is the real Cause of our doing well or ill: Adversity does not make Virtue or Vice, but exert and draw them into Practice; it does not change the Man from what he was, but only discover what he really is.

Chap. XVII.

A Recluse Life.

THE Man who desires to maintain Peace and a good Understanding with others, must learn, in order to it, in many Cases to deny and subdue himself. If then you would keep your Ground, or advance forward in Piety and Virtue, possess yourself entirely with the Notion of your being no better than a Stranger and Pilgrim only here upon Earth. As such, be content to forego the Enjoyments and Esteem of the World, and to be accounted a Fool for Christ's Sake. For, till this be done, You are not duly prepared to retire, and enter in a Course of Life wholly devoted to God and Religion.

The peculiar Habit, and Tonsure, and other Formalities, by which Monasticks are distinguish'd from common Men, add nothing to their Sanctity, nor contribute in the least to render them what they pretend to be. This can only be done by a Temper, as different from the rest of the World, as their Way of Living; An entire Change of Manners, and an effectual Mortification of their Passions and Desires. He that retreats out of any other Design, but the Service and Honour of God, and the Salvation of his Soul, will be so far from avoiding Misery and Trouble, that he will involve himself in new and greater Troubles, and become more exquisitely wretched than the Affairs of the World could make him. No body can continue easy in his own Mind, who does not endeavour to become least of all, and Servant of all.

Remember then that you come to Obey, and not to Govern: The State of Life to which you are called, is a State of Labour and Hardship, and much Suffering; not of Leisure, and Ease, and Diversion. You do

not so properly forsake, as change your Business. For this Sort of Life is such a Trial of Men as the Fire is of Gold: And none make good their Post in it, but such as are content to humble themselves, and heartily and chearfully submit to any Thing, for God's Sake.

Chap. XVIII.

Of the Examples of Holy Men in former Ages.

IT will much contribute to our Progress and Encouragement in Christian Virtues, to keep in View those lively Patterns, which those holy Fathers have set us, whose Zeal and exalted Piety shone clear in former Generations. For, by observing the Brightness of their Lustre, we shall, at the same time, discern the Faintness and Dimness of our own Light, and blush to find the present Age so much eclipsed by the unequal Comparison. Alas! How poor and mean are our Attainments, when put into the Balance with Theirs! Those excellent good Persons, those affectionate Friends and Followers of Christ, served God instantly, in Hunger and Thirst, in Cold and Nakedness, in Labour and Weariness, in Watchings and Fastings, in Prayers and holy Meditations, in many Persecutions and sharp Reproaches.

Blessed God! How many, how grievous Miseries and Hardships did the Apostles and Martyrs, the Confessors and Virgins endure heretofore! And not They only, but all those brave and generous Souls in the Primitive and purer State of the Church, who made it the Study of their whole Lives to tread in the Steps of their meek and suffering Saviour! These heavenly-minded Persons have hated their own Lives unto the Death, that they might preserve them unto Life eternal.

nal. How very auſtere, how entirely mortified, was the Converſation of the ancient Hermits in the Deſarts? How long, how ſharp the Temptations they underwent? How fierce and frequent their Conflicts with the Enemy of Souls? How conſtant and fervent their Prayers? How rigorous their Abſtinence, how unblemiſhed their Chaſtity? How eager their Deſires, how indefatigable their Endeavours after higher Degrees of Perfection? How vigorous and gallant the War they waged againſt their Vices and rebellious Appetites? How pure and uncorrupt all their Intentions, how free from any Mixture of worldly Proſpects, and ſincerely fixed upon God and his Glory? The whole Day they employed in hard Labour, the whole Night in Devotion. From which their very Labours did not hinder them; for even theſe were conſecrated too, by the frequent intermingling of Prayers and holy Ejaculations.

Their great Care, in a Word, was, That no Portion of the Time God gave them in the Body, might be ſpent unprofitably: And what they laboured to make an Improvement, their Zeal made a Delight. For Time in their Eſteem was much too ſwift; and their Devotions ſo far from creating Wearineſs, that every Hour ſeemed ſhort, and ſnatched away thoſe Joys too haſtily, which they felt in converſing with him whom their Soul loved. Their Thoughts were ſo intent, their Raptures ſo entertaining, ſo raviſhingly ſweet, that they became almoſt all Spirit, and quite forgot their Bodies, and the Care neceſſary for ſupporting them in Life. Riches, and Honours, and Greatneſs, and Friends, and Relations, were now no longer their Concern. How ſhould they? when even a Part of their own Perſons ceaſed to be ſo; and providing thoſe Things, without which Mortals cannot ſubſiſt, was now grown a Trouble, and to Perſons ſo abſtracted from Fleſh and Senſe, a painful and unſeaſonable Interruption of better and much more important Buſineſs.

These Men, it is true, had no earthly Possessions; but they who were Poor in that Respect, were exceeding Wealthy in another, rich in the Favour of God, and abounding in excellent Virtues. What they wanted of outward Comforts, was much better supplied by the plentiful Communications of divine Graces, the inward Refreshments and unspeakable Consolations of the blessed Spirit. These Strangers to the World were intimately acquainted with its Maker and Lord; and, how meanly soever they might think of themselves, or how despicable they might appear in the Eyes of others, yet in the Sight of God they were particularly dear, highly honourable, and precious. They persevered in their Humility and sincere Obedience, in their Courage and Constancy, their Meekness, and Patience, and great Charity. And by this Continuance in well-doing, and contented Suffering, they made daily Advances in spiritual Perfection, and attained to a wonderful high Pitch of Grace and Favour with God. By this exemplary Piety they are become proper Patterns for the Imitation of all devout Men in After-ages: And, tho' but a few in Number, ought to encourage and prevail upon us more powerfully to rival their uncommon Zeal, than the numerous Examples of negligent and lukewarm Christians should do, to slacken, and suffer our Piety to grow cold.

To these we may add the ardent Devotion of those holy Men, who retired from the World into Cloisters and Cells, which, at their first Institution, were Places of great Piety and severe Virtue. Their Prayers were frequent and devout, their Emulation in spiritual Perfections noble, their Discipline strict and well ordered; their Obedience to Superiors modest and respectful. Even those Footsteps of their Piety still remaining, for which their Successors have since so scandalously degenerated, are sufficient to inform us, that the first Combatants in this War against the World and the Flesh,

Fleſh, were Men of Gallantry, and juſt Renown. But now, alas! how wretched a Paſs are we come to, when it is counted a mighty Matter, if here and there one keep himſelf from tranſgreſſing the Rules of his Order, and patiently ſubmit to thoſe Exerciſes, which his Profeſſion impoſes upon him?

Oh what a miſerable Age of cold Indifference and wicked Careleſſneſs are we fallen into? How are the holy Flames of primitive Zeal extinguiſhed! And inſtead of being a Delight, how great a Wearineſs, how inſupportable a Burthen, are religious Duties and Exerciſes become to us! How wretched is that Stupidity, how profound that Sleep, which now oppreſſes the Spirit of Mankind, when ſo many bright Examples cannot prevail with us to ſhake off our Sloth and Slumber, nor awaken our Souls into any tolerable Concern for baniſh'd Piety and neglected Virtue!

Chap. XIX.

The Exerciſe of a truly religious Perſon.

THE Life of a Chriſtian, who hath dedicated himſelf to the Service of God, ſhould abound with eminent Virtues of all Kinds, that he may be really the ſame Perſon, which he is by outward Appearance and Profeſſion. Indeed he ought not only to be the ſame, but much more, in his inward Diſpoſition of Soul; becauſe he profeſſes to ſerve a God, who ſees the inward Parts, a Searcher of the Heart and Reins, a God and Father of Spirits: And, therefore, ſince we are always in his Sight, we ſhould be exceeding careful to avoid all Impurity, all that may give Offence to him, whoſe Eyes cannot behold Iniquity. We ſhould, in a Word, ſo far as mortal and frail Nature can, imitate the bleſſed

Angels in all Manner of Holineſs, ſince we, as well as they, are always in his Preſence. To this Purpoſe it would be expedient, daily to renew our Reſolutions of living well, and every Morning to refreſh and quicken that Zeal, with which they were made at firſt. To beg of God that he would help us, and enable us that Day to begin well: To *begin*, I ſay; for all that we have done hitherto ought, in Lowlineſs of Mind to ſeem, and to be acknowledged by us, as nothing.

Great Diligence and Watchfulneſs is neceſſary, in order to diſcharging faithfully what we have intended, and reſolved zealouſly. For if they, who are moſt ſincere and vigorous in their Purpoſes, are yet too often weary, and remiſs in their Performance, What do we think muſt needs become of thoſe who purpoſe but very ſeldom, or very coldly? It is true, indeed, the Occaſions of our falling off, or fainting in our Minds, are various and many; and ſeldom do we allow ourſelves in any Omiſſion of Religious Duties, without even thus perceiving a very ſenſible Abatement and Decay of Zeal. The Perſeverance of good Men, in the Midſt of ſo many Difficulties and Avocations, muſt be aſcribed to God's Favour and Aſſiſtance, more than to any Care and Wiſdom of their own. And good Men have always this Notion of the Thing. For they depend upon God for the Succeſs of all they do, even of their beſt and wiſeſt Undertakings. *Prov.* xvi. 9. *A Man's Heart deviſeth his Way, but the Lord directeth his Steps*, ſays *Solomon*. We may contrive and act as ſeems moſt adviſeable; but, as *the very Preparations of the Heart*, by which we do ſo, are from the Lord; ſo is the Event of our having done it, entirely in his Diſpoſal. *Ibid.* i.

If at any Time a religious Exerciſe be omitted, upon the Account of ſome other Act of Piety or ſome Work of Charity at that Time inconſiſtent with it; this

this does us no Disservice, and the Omission is easily repaired. But, if thro' any Lothness or Indisposition of Mind, if thro' Laziness or any voluntary Neglect of our own, our customary Devotions be passed over; this is from a wicked Cause, and will not fail to have a very ill Effect upon us. When we keep our Zeal with all our Might, and do our very best, yet even then we shall find ourselves often defective. But tho' we cannot arrive at absolute Perfection, nor conquer all our Frailties, nor prevent all our Hindrances in Goodness; yet ought not this to discourage us from striving and resolving. And when we do so, we shall do well not to content ourselves with general Intentions, but bend our Forces against some particular Thing: And chiefly against such, as we have found by Experience to be the greatest and most troublesome Obstruction to our doing well. The Condition of our Affairs without, and that of our own Souls within, must be diligently considered, and reduced into the best Order we can; because both the Circumstances of the One, and the Dispositions of the Other, contribute greatly to our Furtherance in Piety.

It may be, you cannot at all Times recollect and call yourself to Account, but certainly you cannot want Opportunities of doing so once every Day at least. The Morning or the Evening are proper for it. In the Morning you may lay out your Business for the Day following; and at the Return of Night again you may reflect what hath passed in the Day-time; how your Thoughts and Words, and Actions, have agreed with the Scheme of Behaviour you laid before yourself. Where you have transgressed, how far exceeded or fallen short, and in what Instances (for, alas! it is but too likely that you have in many Instances) offended God and Man. In this Scheme you form of living well, quit yourself like a Man, in resisting the Assaults of the Devil. To this End begin with keeping a strict

hand over your Appetite; for when you have once attained to a rigid and masterly Sobriety, all other fleshly Desires and Temptations will be vanquished and kept under with much less Difficulty. To the same Purpose beware of Idleness; be constantly in Action, let Reading, or Writing, or Praying, or Meditating, or Contriving somewhat for the good of Others, employ your leisure Hours. Some bodily Exercises are very fit to be used, but these will require Prudence in the Choice of them; for all are not equally convenient; and therefore the Nature and Degrees of them must be considered, as well as the Temper and Constitution of the Person consulted, to render them profitable.

Some religious Exercises the Community is concerned in, and they must be attended to in Publick. Others are Personal, and these will be best performed in private. This Distinction is of great Use, to keep Men from acting improperly; for even a good Thing may lose much of its Gracefulness and Commendation, by being done out of due Place and Time. Another necessary Caution, which many good People stand in Need of, is, That you should not be so zealously bent upon any private Devotions or Duties, as for their Sakes to slight or disuse the Publick; for these require, at least, an equal Degree of your Esteem, and Care in the Attendance of them. But when you have discharged your Duty in that Point, and done all that your particular Station, or the Commands of your Superiors require from you; Then is the proper Season, and then you will do well, to return into your own Breast, and employ the Remainder of your Time, as Piety and Religious Purposes shall direct. And here again a prudent Choice is needful; for all Sorts, even of Religious Entertainments, are not suited alike to our Spiritual Advantage. Some Difference arises from the Consideration of the Persons, and another very visible one from the different Times and Seasons of using them. Some

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are more proper for Holy Days, others for Common Days; some for Festivals, others for Fasts; some for a Time of Temptation and Affliction, others for a peaceful and serene State of Mind: Some to Persons in Grief, or under calamitous Circumstances; others for Prosperity, when the Spirits flow gayly, and our Hearts rejoice and sing for the Goodness of the Lord. Particularly it will be convenient, in an especial Manner, to renew and raise our Souls, by very frequent and solemn Acts of Piety and Devotion, at the constant Returns of all the Christian Festivals. For these should represent to our Minds, the eternal uninterrupted Festival of Joy and Thanks, celebrated by the Saints in Heaven. And this should put our Souls upon the Wing, inflame our Devotion, mount us up thither, and makes us act even beyond ourselves; more chearfully, more vigorously; as if we were just then going to receive that Glorious Reward of our Labour, which these glad Seasons bring so lively Ideas of to our Thoughts.

And, if the Time of our receiving that Reward be still delayed, let us be so thankful for a longer Time given us here, as, at the same time, to be humbled by that very Length of Life, which the Generality of the World are apt to esteem the great Happiness that can befal them. Let us endeavour to do God still better Service, but let us suspect, that we have not served him yet as we ought. For, if we had, he would not have put off our Recompence to a farther Day; and probable it is, that he does not translate us to Heaven as yet because we are not fit for it. And let us therefore double our Care to qualify ourselves for that Glory which in his own appointed Time shall not fail to be manifested in us. Come he most assuredly will, and *blessed is that Servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, he will make him Ruler over all his Goods, and Partaker of the Joy of his Lord.* *Luke* xii. 37. *Matth.* xxiv. 47.

Chap. XX.

Love of Solitude and Silence.

RESERVE a convenient Proportion of your Time for Privacy and Converſing with yourſelf; and let this be ſpent in frequent and thankful Reflections upon the Mercies of God, and in reading good Books. Among which I adviſe you, by all Means, to let alone nice Diſputes and unprofitable Speculations; and keep to ſuch Subjects, as may be proper for the exciting your Zeal and quickning your Affections, rather than ſuch as may employ the Subtilty of your Wit. Never fear that you ſhall want Leiſure for theſe good Purpoſes. For if you will prevail with yourſelf to abate the mere Impertinencies of Life, the unneceſſary Converſations, the Time ſpent in hearing and telling of News, in enquiring after, and ſpreading about idle Reports, and ſuch as are either faulty or frivolous Waſtings of your Time, you cannot want ſufficient Leiſure, and great Opportunities, for cheriſhing and improving holy and heavenly Meditations. Thus did the moſt eminent Saints induſtriouſly avoid Company and Buſineſs, and choſe to converſe with God in private, as much, and as often, as poſſibly they could.

'Tis a good Reflection, which the Philoſopher made of himſelf; That he never was in other Mens Company, but he came out of it leſs a Man than he went in. And this is what we may frequently confirm by our own Experience, after a great deal of Diſcourſe hath paſſed. 'Tis certainly much eaſier for a Man to reſtrain himſelf from talking at all, than to enter into Diſcourſe, and not ſay more than becomes him: Infinitely eaſier to live at home and ſee no Body, than to go abroad in Company, and return innocent. A Man therefore, who makes inward and ſpiritual Per-

fection his great End, must imitate the Blessed Jesus, and often withdraw himself from the Multitude. No one is qualified to converse in publick, who is not highly contented without such Conversation; nor to entertain, or receive Entertainment from others, who cannot entertain himself alone with Satisfaction. No Man is fit to govern, who hath not learned how to obey: No man can enjoy Mirth with Safety, who is not at the same time in a Condition of rejoicing in a good Conscience: None is fit to speak freely, but he who can, without any Violence to himself, refrain his Tongue, or keep Silence altogether.

Accordingly we may observe that the Pleasures and inward Security of the best Men have always been tempered with the Fear of God. Nor was their Humility or their Care one whit abated, in Consideration of those extraordinary Virtues, and abundant Measures of Divine Grace, in which they excell'd common Christians. But the Security of Wicked Men, and that Satisfaction they take in themselves, spring from Pride and Haughtiness of Temper; and therefore the constant Effects of it are an undue Contempt of others, and a false Opinion of themselves.

Never flatter yourself with an Expectation of absolute Safety in this Life, whatever your Condition, how far so ever retired from the World, or out of the Way of Temptation, it may seem to be. For it often happens, that those, whom the World esteems in Strength and Virtue above common Men, have been involved in Dangers proportionably greater than Theirs; merely upon the Account of the too confident Opinion they had of their own Abilities. And this Consideration makes the being tempted sometimes a Blessing, greater than that of living altogether easy and free from Temptation. For the oftner we are attack'd, the greater Check this gives to our Self-conceit and Spiritual Security; and the more we are afflicted, the less apt we shall

shall be to love or use the external Advantages of this World, beyond the Bounds of Decency and Moderation. And if a Man could so perfectly draw off his Mind from these, as never to pursue any transitory Pleasure; never to engage himself with the World; O what blessed, what perpetual Peace of Conscience would that Man feel, and even be ravished with! Nay, could we but cut off all our unprofitable and groundless Fears and Cares, and employ our Thoughts upon such Objects only, as are weighty and useful; such as promote the Honour and Service of God, our own Salvation, and the Good of others: How easy and quiet, how free from all Reproach, would such a one's Breast be to him!

No Man deserves inward and heavenly Comforts, who does not diligently examine, and willingly afflict himself. To be qualified for this Solitude, it is absolutely needful to observe that Method recommended by the Psalmist, *Commune with your own Heart in your Chamber, and be still. Enter into thy Closet, and shut thy Door about thee*, says our Saviour. Advice, which can never be more seasonable, than upon these Occasions: For the Closet will give you the Satisfaction, which it is scarce possible not to lose in a more publick Place. And if the Closet be not pleasant, the only Reason is, That it hath been less frequented than it ought. To those who at first use this Retirement carefully, it ministers a Pleasure and secret Consolation, above what any Company or Diversion in the World can pretend to.

Psalm iv. *Matth.* vi.

It is by silent and solitary Study, that the Soul gets acquainted with the hidden Mysteries of Scripture. Here she finds those Floods of pious Tears, by which holy Men wash themselves Day and Night; here she contracts a Familiarity and free Intercourse with God, so much the closer and more intimate, as she removes to a greater Distance from the Noise and Hurry of the World.

World. Think not then, that the Man who withdraws from his Friends and Acquaintance is perfectly alone. No, he only changes that for better Company, and is visited in his quiet Retreats by God and his holy Angels. A wise Man would rather chuse to live thus unobserved, and to prosecute the Business of his Soul without Interruption, than even to work Miracles, and attract universal Admiration and Applause, at the expence of neglecting his own Safety.

It is highly agreeable to the Character of a Person entirely devoted to God, to stir but seldom abroad, to decline being publickly seen of Men, and to be as little fond of seeing the World. For to what purpose indeed should any one be eager to see that which he must not enjoy? *The World passeth away, and all the desires thereof*, says the Apostle. Our sensual Affections invite and entice us, but when the moment of gratifying that Inclination is once over, what have you got by the Bargain, but serious Remorse, and an unsettled Temper of Mind? He that goes out full of Satisfaction, often returns as full of Melancholy and Disgust; and many a Merry Evening occasions a Sad Morning. Thus all the Pleasures of Sense caress and court us at the first meeting, but at their parting leave a Sting behind, and gall our Hearts with sharp and killing Pains. What can you see in any other Place, which the most retired Grove or Desart will not present to your Eye? Here you survey the Heavens, here view the Earth, here see the several Elements, which are the Seeds and first Ingredients, of which the whole World and every Creature in it are compounded.

1 *John* ii. 17.

But what can you see either here or any where else, which is of long Continuance? You expect perhaps, that Variety will satisfy you: Alas! it cannot be. For, suppose you could at one View have all things under the Sun set before you; what is there even in this, save only the beholding them with your Eyes? Turn then those

thoſe Eyes where they may gaze with Profit. Look up to God on high; fix them upon the Throne of Grace in Prayer, and continue ſtedfaſt and fervent in this, till you obtain Pardon for your Sins and Errors. Leave the Vanities of the World to the Vain Men of the World; But conſider that you are a Child of God, and therefore bend your Thoughts and Labours entirely to thoſe Things, which your Heavenly Father requires at your Hands. Invite that Jeſus, in whom your Soul delights, into your Apartment; there ſolace yourſelf with his Love; for in that Converſation only true Peace and ſolid Joy are to be found. If this ſeem a Paradox, I muſt inform you what is the true Occaſion of its doing ſo. Had you never mingled yourſelf with the World, nor imbibed any of its vain Notions, your Mind had been more ſettled and compoſed. But now the Itch of Novelty hath taken hold of you, and it muſt coſt ſome Uneaſineſs to cure this Evil. And till that Cure be effected, Peace and perfect Evenneſs of Temper you cannot have, nor be reconciled to Solitude, and the ſubſtantial Pleaſures that attend it.

Chap. XXI.

Compunction of Heart.

He that would grow in Virtue and Grace, muſt be ſure to preſerve a conſtant awful Senſe of the Divine Majeſty upon his Mind; Checking by his holy Fear all his indecent Liberties, keeping his Appetites and Affections under ſtrict Diſcipline; and not letting himſelf looſe to light or extravagant Mirth. Employ yourſelf therefore in humbling and afflicting your own Mind, and this will certainly lead you to a devout and truly Chriſtian Temper. For infinite Advantage

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is to be had by these zealous Exercises, which Folly and Inconsideration quickly lose again. One would wonder indeed, how Men can indulge their Mirth to so extravagant a Degree; when the Miseries of this Life, and the Sins we have to account for, are so many and so great, that a Man who seriously considers the Danger his Soul is in, can very hardly be merry at all, without some sudden Damp upon his Spirits. It is from the Levity of our own unthinking Minds, a stupid Forgetfulness of our sinful Condition, and a continuing insensible of those Sorrows which ought most tenderly to affect us, that we so often indulge the Excesses of Laughter and Gaiety, when Sighs and Tears would much better become us.

Assure yourself, there can be no true Liberty, no innocent Merriment, without the Fear of God, and a good Conscience. Happy therefore is the Man, who can disengage himself from all those Hindrances, which the Business and Diversions of the World cast in his way; and can give his Thoughts up entirely to that godly Sorrow, which worketh Repentance and Salvation. Happy He, that can abandon every thing by which his Conscience is defiled or burthened; and set himself at Liberty from treacherous and ensnaring Pleasures. And this may be compassed by Resolution and Constancy. For, how difficult and contrary soever it may seem to the general Way of the World, and our own former Practice; yet no Habit is so strong, but by frequent and Manly Attempts, the direct contrary Habit may be acquired and confirmed.

If you will firmly set yourself to let other Peoples Affairs alone, they will follow the Example, and not concern themselves with yours. Do not therefore create unnecessary Trouble to yourself, by making other Mens Business your own, and involve your Thoughts and Cares in Matters of Persons above you. Leave the great ones of the World to manage their own

own Concerns, and keep your Eyes and Obſervation at home. Your own Soul is the Thing you ought to look after. This requires your niceſt Inſpection, and utmoſt Diligence; and the Cenſuring and Correcting yourſelf is a Duty, which ſhould take place above the Adviſing or Reproving the deareſt Friend you have. It may be, this Reſerve may be interrupted Sullenneſs, and loſe you the Favour and good Eſteem of Men; but let not that Loſs afflict you. There can be no ſuch juſt Ground of Diſſatisfaction and Remorſe, as the not behaving yourſelf with all the ſtrict Virtue and Circumſpection, which becomes a Perſon who hath renounced the World, and devoted himſelf to the Service of God. 'Tis true, an honourable Opinion of us is a Comfort: But it is ſometimes better to want Variety of Comforts, than to have them. This is often the Caſe with Advantages merely human, the External, and the Worldly: And, as for thoſe which are Spiritual, and derived from God, if we be either deprived of theſe, or not ſenſible of their ſweet Refreſhment; the Fault is our own, who neglect to put ourſelves into a fit Diſpoſition for them, by godly Sorrow for our Sins, and abandoning thoſe vain and outward Comforts, which ſhould make Room for the Subſtantial and Heavenly.

Get therefore a true and perfect Knowledge of yourſelf; ſee and confeſs, that you deſerve not any Divine Conſolation, nay, that you do really deſerve Deſertion, and Sorrow, and much Miſery. When a Man's Mind is inflamed with a truly religious Zeal, this World appears not only flat and inſipid, but very bitter and loathſome to him. A good Man can never fail of diſcovering juſt Matter of Grief, and many Occaſions that provoke his Tears. For, whether he conſider his own Circumſtances, or thoſe of other Men, who will find that no Man here is exempted from Calamities. And the more cloſely he conſiders his own Condition, the greater ſtill will

will be his Concern. But the Misfortunes from without might be borne with better Temper, were there not much more grievous from within. For, of all the Miseries that humble our Souls with Sadness, none are so justly lamented as our Sins and Infirmities; the wretched Load and Incumbrance these are to our Conscience; and the Indisposition, the Disability they bring us under, of attending without Distraction to Holy Duties and Heavenly Contemplations.

By these we are engaged upon trifling and unprofitable Thoughts, and diverted from weighty and useful Subjects. For would we but turn the Current of our Thoughts another way, the Effect would be visible and very happy. If we did but seriously reflect, how certainly we must die, as often as we think how long it is likely we may live; we should be more zealous and diligent to amend our Lives, and provide for that important Change. And would we but set before our Minds a lively Representation of those dreadful Torments which await the Damned in Hell; it were not possible sure to shrink back as we do, from the Austerities and Mortifications of a Religious Life; or to suppose any Labour and Pain which we can undergo in the mean while, a Hardship not most willingly to be chosen, for the preventing so dreadful a Condemnation. But now, because these things are but seldom and very slightly thought upon, and we, in tenderness to our own Ease, much rather submit to the soothing Impressions of present deceitful Pleasures, than to those harsh and cutting ones of future Misery and Anguish; we still go on in the same Coldness and Indifference, and indulge our Sloth at the Expence of our Virtue.

I grant indeed, that some Religious Severities are tedious and painful to the Body. But the Fault does not always lie there; for the Body sometimes complains and droops, not so much from its own Suffering, as from the Meanness and Cowardice of the Soul, which

which ought to encourage and support it. Beg therefore of God most earnestly that he would kindle in your Hearts a true Christian Courage and fervent Zeal. Dare to entertain yourself upon the most ungrateful, when they are profitable and necessary Subjects. Prefer the Mournings of a Pious Penitent before all the vain Jollity of a wicked and unthinking World; and pray that God would do to thee, what the Psalmist says he doth to his own People, even *feed thee with the Bread of Tears, and give thee Plenteousness of Tears to drink.*

Psal. lxxx. 5.

Chap. XXII.

The Miserable Condition of Man considered.

WRetched thou art, O Man, whereſoever thou art, Wretched thou must be, which way soever thou turnest thyself: Beset on all sides with Miseries without Remedy, without any Possibility of Escape by Human Helps; and only to be avoided by taking Sanctuary in God. Why then art thou disquieted at Crosses and Disappointments; when these are the Portion of all Mankind? It is not yours and mine alone, but the greatest, the best Men drink of the bitter Cup: And no Man ever lived in uninterrupted Happiness: None ever succeeded in all his Wishes and Attempts; None ever was above Calamities, or free from Vexation of Spirit. Since therefore so ordained it is, that all must suffer and be miserable, Are all equally so? No, there are different Conditions and Degrees of Suffering; and His is certainly the best and most comfortable, who is called and disposed to suffer for the sake of God and a good Conscience.

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It is usual for Men, who know no better, to envy and admire the Rich, the Great, the Honourable; to imagine that Princes and Persons of plentiful Fortunes, are compleatly happy. But this is the Effect of great Weakness and Inconsideration. If therefore we would rectify such mistaken Apprehensions, let us get a right Notion of Spiritual and Heavenly Advantages. These will convince us, of what poor Account all worldly Enjoyments should be in our Esteem: How very little, how mere a Nothing they are; how hard and hazardous to be attained; how uncertain the Preservation of them, and how full of Trouble and anxious Care, even while we have them. And who would be fond of that, which can neither be got, nor lost, no, nor kept neither, without Fear, and Sorrow, and perpetual Solicitude? Surely then the Happiness of Man does *not consist in the abundance of the Things which he possesseth.* 'Tis senseless and absurd to think it can. And if no Proportion of worldly Goods, tho' never so large, can exempt us from Misery; then a competent Measure of them ought to satisfy us. For miserable we must be with less or more. The very living here upon Earth, without any additional Calamity, would make us inevitably so. The more a Man desires and labours to be like God, the less agreeable Relish he hath of Life; because he is so much more sensible, more thoroughly convinced, of the Frailty and Corruption of Human Nature. For, what is this Vicissitude, this daily Round of Eating and Drinking, Sleeping and Waking, Weariness and Rest, and the many other Necessities, which the Condition of Mortality enslaves us to? Doubtless it is a mighty Burthen and Affliction, to Men whose Minds are wholly fixed upon higher Things, and whose only Ambition it is to get above Sin and Infirmity. *Luke* xii. 15.

For the Distresses and Wants of the Outward Man are a sore Hindrance and great Oppression to the In-

ward; and we shall not perhaps injure *David*'s Sense, by supposing even these included in that Petition, where he begs of God to *deliver him out of his Troubles*. But, wretched are They indeed, who are not sensible of their Wretchedness; and yet more so still are those vain People, who are even in Love with it; who dote upon this Mortal Life, which exposes them to it, and cannot think of parting with it at any Rate, even when in such uncomfortable Circumstances, that all their Time and Care is scarce sufficient to furnish them with Provisions necessary for the Support of it. And yet these infatuated Creatures are content to lay themselves out upon Toil and Trouble; and, might they but be suffered to continue here for ever, could dispense with any Concern for God and Goodness, and willingly forego the Hopes and Everlasting Happiness of a Heavenly Kingdom.

Psal. xxv. 17.

O foolish and slow of Heart to understand and believe your true Interest; How deep are you immersed in Flesh and Sense? How sottishly deluded with Dross, and fond of Vanities which cannot profit? Have you no Notion left of any Thing but Body? No Regard for a future enduring Substance? Raise your Affections up to Nobler Enjoyments, and disengage them from those gross, those empty Objects, which if you still persist in the Love and Pursuit of, you will one Day be taught by sad Experience, how poor and despicable they really are, and how unworthy of all that eager Concern you have thrown away upon them. Be persuaded then by Reason and Religion, and do not provoke God to convince you by Torments and too late Remorse, of how fatal Consequence the Love of this World is, to all that are immoderately fond of it. View well those Illustrious Patterns of Mortification and Heavenly-mindedness, which the Primitive Saints and Favourites of Christ have set you. These great

great good Men had small Regard to the Pleasures of Sense, and glittering Gaieties of this World, but kept their Eyes and Hearts intent upon Eternal Joys: Those were their Hope, their Delight, the earnest and only Longing of their Souls: And therefore the Only one, lest if their Affections were at all divided, the Love of the Things that are seen, should fasten down their Hearts to mean and earthly Objects, and hinder them from soaring up on high to the infinitely more precious Things that are not seen.

This is indeed a Work of Pains and Time; but let not that Consideration drive you to despair of attaining an Heavenly Temper of Mind. The Undertaking is great, 'tis true; and the Time allowed for it but short; but still this short Space is enough, if you will take Care to make the best of it. Up then, and be doing; do not purpose well To-Day, and put off the Execution to a farther Day, but rather argue yourself into Action by such Reflections as these. This very Instant is the proper Time, this the Season of Amendment, and fighting the good Fight. It is by Hardship and Suffering, that Men recommend themselves to the Acceptance and Favour of God. He hath ordained, that Fire and Water, Distress and Tribulation should be the Way that leads to Refreshment and true Bliss. Without some Violence upon thyself, Sin cannot be subdued, nor evil Customs broken. Without some Uneasiness and Pain we cannot live; and, while we carry this Body of Flesh about us, these will make an inseparable Part of the Burthen. We wish indeed for Ease and untroubled Satisfaction; but, as the Condition of Mankind stands at present, we wish in vain. For, in losing the Innocence of our Nature, we lost our Happiness too; and, as both left us, so both must be restored together. Patience is now become a necessary Virtue, and we must be content to wait the Season of God's Mercy; when he shall

fully repair our Breaches, heal our Infirmities, put a Period to our Unrighteousness, absolve the Guilt, blot out the Remembrance of them, and cause Mortality to be swallowed up of Life.

In the mean time, it cannot, methinks, but be a mighty Mortification, to consider how exceeding prone this frail Nature of ours is to Sin. To-day you confess your Sins to God, and To-morrow you act those very Sins over again, which you lamented but the Day before. This Hour you resolve to be watchful, and take good heed to all your Ways; and the very next Hour you run on as giddily and rashly as ever; forget your Resolutions, and stand more Self-condemned than if you had never resolved at all. So great Reason is there for thinking very meanly of ourselves, and disclaiming all vain Confidences in any Thing we are, or do. But these so sudden and frequent Relapses are not our Misfortunes, but our Faults. They are indeed the Consequents of our Frailty; but that Frailty would not affect us to that Degree, did not we contribute to it by our own Negligence and Inconstancy. And a small Neglect will soon undo, what cost much Time and Labour to effect; nay, what could not have been effected even so neither, had not Almighty God seconded our Endeavours with his Divine Assistance.

But if we cool so very quickly, and *cannot Watch one Hour*, what will become of us at last, and how shall we persevere in Faithfulness unto the End? Wretched are we indeed, if we faint and grow weary, if we give out and seek Refreshment, as if we were already safe and in absolute Peace; when we have scarce begun the Battle, and gained but little Ground in Holiness and Reformation of Manners. Alas! we are as yet but raw Beginners; so far from compleat Masters in our Business, that we have still Need to learn and practise the very first Rules of Living over again, be-

fore we can be so perfect as we wish and ought to be. Nor should we disdain to do so, if those Condescensions can prove of use to us.

Chap. XXIII.

Meditations concerning Death.

SINCE Life is of short and uncertain Continuance, it highly concerns you to look about you, and take good heed how you employ it. To-day the Man is vigorous, and gay, and flourishing, and To-morrow he is cut down, withered and gone. A very little Time carries him out of our Sight, and a very little more out of our Remembrance. O the Hardness of Mens Hearts! O the wretched Stupidity! that fixes their whole Thoughts and Care upon the present; and will not be prevailed with to look before them, or bear any Regard to That which must come hereafter. Whereas in truth, every Work, and Word, and Thought, ought to be so ordered, as if it were to be our Last, and we instantly to die, and render an Account of it. Would we entertain ourselves more with the Thoughts of Death, it would be less a Terror to us: For, in proportion as our Lives amend, our Fears will abate, and a clear Conscience will enable us to meet Death with undaunted Courage. However Flesh and Frailty may impose upon us, yet, be assured, 'tis greater Wisdom to be afraid of Sinning, than to be afraid of Dying; a greater Blessing to preserve our Innocence, than to prolong our Lives. And whence is all this Fear and Anxiety? Is it because we are not fit to Die? But if you are not fit to Day, how do you propose to be so To-morrow? Alas! To-morrow is uncertain; neither You, nor I, nor any Man can depend

upon it. Or if we could, yet what does it avail to Live, tho' it were much longer, when we by longer Living grow so little better? Assure yourself, long Life is far from being always a Blessing. Too many (God knows) are so far from growing holier, as they grow older, that the Number of their Days only adds to the Number of their Sins, and renders their Account more heavy hereafter.

Happy is that Man who can comfort himself with having employed any one Day of his Life so perfectly well, as he might, and ought to have done. Many reckon up the Years of their Conversion with great Satisfaction, and think it a mighty Matter that they have so long abandoned the World and a vicious Course. And yet, when the Time they boast of comes to be compared with the Improvements they have made, how shamefully little is the Good they have done? If Dying now be terrible, yet remember that Living longer may be dangerous: and many, many a Man finds too great Occasion to wish, that it had pleased God to take him away sooner. Happy therefore is He who keeps the Hour of Death constantly in View? and from this Prospect of what must come, takes care to reconcile himself to it, and to put his Soul into a proper Temper for it, when it does come.

If you attend at any Time upon a Death-Bed, and see another in his Parting Agonies; consider that this Friend is gone the same Way where you must shortly follow him. In the Morning, question whether you may live till Night; and when Night comes, do not too confidently promise yourself another Morning. Thus shall you be in a constant Expectation, and in a good Disposition to die. And be sure so to live always, that Death may never overtake you unprovided, nor its suddenest Approach be sudden and surprizing, in respect of You. Many are snatched away in an Instant, and die when they were not in the least

aware

aware of it, for *in such an Hour as we think not, the Son of Man cometh.* Let not the Preparation I am advising, be neglected, as a melancholy unpleasant Thing; such as embitters Life, and damps Mens present Enjoyment; for, be assured, whatever Satisfaction you may take now, when that last Hour draws on, it will give you quite other Notions of the Matter. And the Reflections upon your past Improvidence and Neglect will be more bitter and afflicting then, than any the most sollicitous Forecast for Dying well, can possibly be in the mean time. *Matth.* xxiv. 44.

O how wise, how happy is that Man, who makes it his daily Care to be such while he liveth, as he desires to be found when he comes to Die! We may cherish a good Hope and great Assurance of leaving the World to our Comfort and infinite Advantage, if, while we continue in it, we can bring ourselves to neglect and despise it: If we be zealous to improve in Virtue, in Love with Discipline and Mortification; if we attend to the Exercise of Repentance; if we be of an humble and obedient Disposition; content to deny ourselves, and ready to undergo any Hardship for Christ's Sake. But if these Qualifications be necessary, they are necessary to be attained in Health. For then a Man is in a Condition to strive, and to exert himself; but when Sickness is upon him, it is a great Question what he will be able to do, or whether any thing at all. Whatever the Generality of the World may imagine, who put off this great Work till such improper Seasons; yet, sure it is, that few, but very few, are reformed by a Sick Bed. And they who defer their Repentance and Amendment till then, seldom, alas! repent as they ought, or are amended in good earnest.

Depend not upon the Assistance of your Relations and Acquaintance: Nor cherish an Imagination so vain, as that their Prayers hereafter can effect, what you ne-

ver endeavoured to effect here. These can do you no Service: But if they could, yet, when once gone, you will be forgotten much sooner than you are willing to believe. And why should you rest upon Their Care, when you cannot be prevailed with for your Own? Can it be supposed, They should be more concerned for your Salvation, than You, whose proper Interest it is? Allowing then, that these could do you good, yet even thus, 'tis better you should do your own Business; better, in regard of the Person, and better in regard of the Time: For *now* is the Season of Acceptance, *now* is the Day of Salvation. And therefore this Moment is the fittest for your Purpose: The sooner you change, the better: Live then while you may; and begin from the present Minute to live so, that you may live for ever. For if you suffer the happy Opportunity to slip through your Hands, you will wish for it afterwards, when it is too late; and you may perhaps be reduced to such Circumstances, that One Day, One Hour, for making your Peace with God may not be obtained; no, not when you would gladly give, were it at your Disposal, the whole World to purchase it.

Consider then, my Friend and Fellow-Christian, consider what a Risque you run by your Delays: Think, what Misery and Danger, what Confusion and Despair it is now in your Power to prevent, by living like a Man that remembers he must die. And therefore so spend every Hour, that when your last draws on, you may receive it with Joy and Hope, instead of Fear and Astonishment. Learn *now* to Die daily, to Die to Sin and the World, that you may then begin to Live with Christ. Learn *now* to despise all here below, that you may then be disengaged, and at perfect Liberty to leave all and follow Christ. Subdue your Body *now* by Mortification and Self-denial, and you shall then have great Boldness in the Day of Tribulation.

Does

Does any Confidence of long Life encourage you to defer putting this good Advice in Execution ſpeedily? Nay, but reflect, fond Man, how little you can promiſe yourſelf one poor ſingle Day. How many Inſtances have you before your Eyes, or freſh in your Remembrance, of Perſons miſerably deluded and diſappointed in this Hope, and hurried out of the Body without any warning at all? How often have you been ſurprized with the News of this Friend being run thro', another drowned in croſſing the Water, a Third breaking his Neck by a Fall, a Fourth fallen down dead at Table, or choaked with his Meat, a Fifth ſeized with an Apoplexy at Play, a Sixth burnt in his Bed, a Seventh murthered, an Eighth killed by Thieves, a Ninth ſtruck with Lightning, or Blaſting, or Peſtilence, a Tenth ſwallowed up in an Earthquake? Such vaſt Variety of Deaths ſurround us, and ſo fleeting a Shadow is the Life of Man.

And if any of theſe happens to be your Caſe, Who ſhall help, Who can ſave you, when the precious Opportunity is fled and loſt? Be doing then betimes; for, tho' you cannot ſo much as gueſs at the Hour and Manner of your own Death, yet ſafe you are, or may be, if you will provide againſt it. Uſe Time then while you have it; make haſte to be rich toward God, and let Religion and your own Salvation be your Chief, your Only Concern. *Make yourſelf Friends* while you may, *who when you fail may receive you into everlaſting Habitations.* *Luke* xvi. 9.

Behave yourſelf as a Stranger and Pilgrim upon Earth, and entangle not your Thoughts in Matters which do not belong to you. For Sojourners are not Proprietors, and therefore ſuch ſhould keep their Minds looſe and free, and not ſettle their Affections upon things, which they are leaving very ſhortly: Raiſe your Soul to God, and let it not dwell there, where you *have no continuing City.* *Heb.* xiii. 14.

City. Look up to that which is ſo, and ſend your Prayers, and Tears, and earneſt Deſires before you thither; that when God calls, you may readily follow in Perſon, and make a happy Exchange of this miſerable World for a better.

Chap. XXIV.

Of the Laſt Judgment, and the Eternal Puniſhment of Ungodly Men.

Whatſoever thou takeſt in Hand, remember the End, and thou ſhalt never do amiſs, ſays the Wiſe Son of *Sirach*. And certainly this would prove a moſt uſeful Direction, if we by the End underſtand that laſt great Account, which will one Day be required of all our Actions. For how powerful, how happy a Reſtraint ſhould we live under, did we but ſeriouſly reflect, and conſtantly aſk ourſelves, how we ſhall dare to ſtand before that ſtrict and righteous Judge, to whom *all Hearts are open, all Deſires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid?* One, who cannot, like other Judges, be diverted from the ſteddy Courſe of Juſtice, blinded by Bribes and Preſents, or ſoftned by ſubtle Extenuations, or impoſed upon by feigned Excuſes, and ſtudied Evaſions; but who weighs all Perſons and Cauſes by the Eternal Standard of Equity and Truth. Ah, wretched Guilty Creature! Ah, ſtupid Unthinking Sinner! that trembleſt at the Frown of a Man like thyſelf, and canſt not fear that Bar, where nothing can turn to thy Prejudice, but open and notorious Faults! How wilt thou appear at this Tribunal, or what Plea canſt thou urge in Bar of Sentence, to Him who needs no Evidence, but is Himſelf privy to thy moſt concealed Impieties? Doſt thou

Eccluſ. vii. 36.

thou know this, and yet go on unconcerned how thou ſhalt eſcape the Terrors of that dreadful Day? Without thy own Care, eſcape thou canſt not: For this Judgment is univerſal; All Mankind muſt ſtand upon their Deliverance; every one muſt bear his own Burden, and every one's Burden is more than enough for himſelf; ſo that no Man will be in a Condition of Aſſiſting another. To expect any Advantage, any Atonement then, is moſt ſenſeleſs. Thou only canſt prevent thy own Deſtruction, and this Life is the only Time of preventing it. Thy holy Labours now will turn to good Account; thy pious Mournings move Compaſſion, thy Prayers and Groans enter the Ears of God, and melt him into Mercy. The Meek and Patient Man will then be conſidered for his conſtant Suffering and invincible Charity. The Grief he now conceives for Wrongs, is more for the Wickedneſs and Guilt of the Perſon who does them, than for any Inconvenience brought upon himſelf; and this Diſpoſition will mitigate his own Offence; he heartily forgives, and prays that God would forgive his Enemies; and this entitles him to the Forgiveneſs of his own Treſpaſſes. He is more eaſily provoked to Pity than to Anger: And ſhall be dealt with accordingly, by a God long-ſuffering, ſlow to Wrath, and ſparing when Men deſerve Puniſhment. He often treats his Body with Severity and Violence, and continues the rigorous Diſcipline, till the Fleſh be effectually ſubdued by the Spirit; and therefore good Amends ſhall be made him for theſe voluntary Sufferings, and the neglected Pleaſures of Senſe will be liberally recompenſed by the Abundance of Heavenly and Intellectual Joys. But then, it is plain, theſe good Qualities which miniſter an Entrance into that Bliſs, muſt be attained as ſoon as we can poſſibly. This preſent State of Mortality is the only Scene of Action and Improvement; and ſince this Scene ſo ſuddenly may change, we are not

not safe in the Delay of one Moment. This is in truth our Case. But we are loth to understand it; and so inordinately fond of Sensual Delights, that we even take a Pleasure in imposing upon ourselves; and by the most fatal of all Infatuations, cherish and gratify our Bodies, at the Expence, and extreme Hazard of our Souls.

And what is the Effect of this, but heaping up more Fewel for everlasting Flames to feed upon? For our Sins and Lusts kindle and blow up those Fires; and the more heinous and imptuous these are, the fiercer and more furiously those will be sure to burn. For, as the Torments of ungodly Wretches shall there be exquisite for their Degree, so shall they for their Kind and Quality be suited and proportioned to the Sins of each particular Person; and so contrived, as to be most sensibly afflicting and painful to the respective Tempers and Complexions of Men, the Habits they have contracted, and the Appetites they have indulged. The Lazy and Stupid shall be awakened and rouzed into Sense, by sharp Scourges, and burning Stings. The Glutton and Drunkard gnawed with insatiable Hunger, and parched with unquenchable Thirst. The Nice and Delicate, who proposed no Happiness here to themselves, but Luxury and Pleasure, shall then be strangled with the noisome Vapours of flaming Pitch, and stinking Sulphur. The Envious and Discontented shall howl perpetually like mad Dogs. The Proud and Vain-glorious shall be confounded with Shame and Contempt. The Covetous shall pine away with extreme Penury and Want; and no one Vice shall escape a Torture, exactly fitted to make its Indulger the most miserable that it is possible for him to be. In a Word, One single Hour in those dismal Pains and Horrors shall be more insupportable, than whole Ages of that Uneasiness, which wicked Men here have so irreconcilable an Aversion

to

to submit to, for mortifying their Vanities, and amending their Lives.

For, (which is of all others the last and dreadfulest Aggravation,) those Miseries and Tortures have no End, no Refreshment, no Intermission. But the sharpest Afflictions we endure in this Life, will quickly have a Period: They have their Interval of Ease and Comfort; and those Sorrows, which we feel upon a Religious Account, are largely recompensed with Spiritual Consolations, and sweet Peace of Mind. Do not then grudge a little present Grief; but mourn earnestly for thy Sins, and bend thy utmost Thoughts and Care to the Subduing and Reforming them; that this short Anxiety may deliver thee from Eternal Despair, and Anguish unconceivable; and those few Tears of Repentance, may secure to thee a Portion of Everlasting Joy with the Blessed.

O happy Reverse of all their Griefs and Sufferings which the Righteous shall find in that Day! when they shall stand full of Hope and humble Confidence before that Judgment-Seat, from which their Haughty and Mercileſs Oppressors, confounded with Fear, and amazed with Guilt, shall strive and wish in vain to hide their trembling Heads. When he, who now stands tamely at the Bar of Men, and innocently suffers, shall then be advanced to a Throne, and placed among the Saints and Martyrs, to assist at the Trial of his, once insulting, Judges. When the Poor and Meek shall have great Boldness, while the Proud and great Sinner quakes at the Presence of God and the Lamb. When that Piety and godly Fear, that Abstinence and severe Virtue, that patient Enduring for Christ's Sake, which is now thought just matter of Derision and Contempt, and counted Folly and religious Madness, shall then be acknowledged by its most satirical Scorners, to be indeed the True, the Only Wisdom. When the Remembrance of past Miseries shall be sweet, and They, whose

whoſe wicked Malice exerciſed ſuch Patience, ſhall be ſtruck dumb with ſad Remorſe and Bitterneſs of Soul. When all, who devoted themſelves to God and his Service, ſhall be tranſported with Raptures of Joy; and all thoſe who diſregarded or deſpiſed them, ſhall weep and lament. When the Afflicted and Perſecuted ſhall bleſs his bitter Cup, and feel more refined, more ſubſtantial Delights from it, than ſenſual Pleaſures, or uninterrupted Proſperity could ever bring to the moſt Voluptuous and Fortunate. When the plain Dreſs of the Humble, and Sackloth of the Penitent, ſhall ſhine glorious as the Sun; and all the gay Pomp and gliſtering Jewels of the proud and gaudy Sinner ſhall be trampled under Foot like Dung. When the Cottage ſhall take place of the Court, Patience appear more eligible than the moſt boundleſs and arbitrary Power; the honeſt Obedience of an humble Faith, more wiſe than the niceſt Cavils of the ſubtleſt Wit; and a good Conſcience more uſeful Learning, than the moſt elaborate Syſtems of Philoſophy. When the Contempt of Riches ſhall approve itſelf the greateſt Treaſure; devout Prayer the moſt delicious Entertainment; Silence and Caution the beſt Converſation. When good Works ſhall plead better than the moſt accurate Eloquence; Alms prove the moſt prevailing Advocate; Self-denial the moſt exalted Pleaſure; and the Conqueſt of ill Habits the moſt glorious Triumph.

If then this be, (and this moſt aſſuredly is) a true Repreſentation of that deciſive Day: If this the different Fate and Effect of theſe ſo very different Perſons and Practices; Conſider, I conjure thee, the Circumſtances of thoſe Damned. And harden thyſelf from this Reflection, to endure a *Little* now, when *That little* will ſecure thee againſt enduring infinitely more hereafter. Make tryal of thy ſelf, and if the ſlight Difficulties of a Religious Life ſeem tedious and tireſome; turn the Argument againſt thy ſenſual Inclina-

tion, and think, how one who ſinks under theſe, will be able to dwell with exquiſite and everlaſting Torments. Nor is this a trifling needleſs Enquiry, but abſolutely neceſſary, and of mighty Moment. For Matters are ſo ordered, that perfect Eaſe can be no Man's Portion in *both* Worlds. They who chuſe their good Things here, cannot have them hereafter too; nor ſhall any Man, who indulges Senſe and Pleaſure upon Earth, Rejoice and Reign with Chriſt in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Suppoſe then, that, from your Entrance into the Body to this very Day, you had enjoyed the utmoſt your Heart could poſſibly deſire, of all which this World calls Happineſs; Honours, Riches, Pleaſures, without Check, or Stint, or Interruption: Yet what Good would all this do to you, if it ſhould pleaſe God juſt now to ſtrike you with Death? Do not you plainly ſee, without my proſecuting this Argument any farther, that all below is Vanity and mere Nothing, and that the Love of God and a Religious Life is the only Thing which can ſtand you in any Stead? This will ſtick by you, when all the reſt forſake you. This is neither deſtroyed by Death, nor afraid of Puniſhment, but Triumphs over both; fills the Man with Confidence and joyful Expectation at the dreadful Day of Judgment; and ſets him above all the Terrors and diſmal Apprehenſions of Hell and its Tortures. But then, This is the peculiar Privilege of the Servants of God; for how is it poſſible for the Men who practiſe and delight in Wickedneſs, to think of Death and Judgment, without Fear and Perplexity of Heart? How ſhould they enjoy Quiet, and be eaſy in their Minds, if they think at all what is coming apace upon them? Let then the Love of God prevail over that of Sin. But if thou art not yet perfect enough to be acted by this noble Principle; Let at leaſt the Love of *thyſelf* reclaim thee, and the Fear of Hell reſtrain

reſtrain and deter thee from a Courſe, which muſt end at laſt in thy utter and inevitable Ruin. *Pſal.* cxi. 10. This, ſays the Scripture, *is the beginning of Wiſdom*; for he who is Proof againſt the Fear of God, cannot perſevere in any thing that is good; as having no manner of Principle that can ſave him, no Curb upon his Mind that can awe, or hold him in, from running headlong into the Snares of the Devil.

Chap. XXV.

Of Zeal in the Reformation of our Lives.

Be fervent in Prayer, ſerving the Lord, ſays the Apoſtle. And ſuch indeed it highly concerns every one to be in his Service. For what is the End we propoſe, by dedicating ourſelves in ſolemn Vows to Chriſt? Or to what purpoſe do we renounce the World and its Vanities; but that theſe ſacred Ties may engage our utmoſt Watchfulneſs and Diligence, to conſecrate our Perſons and Actions, to conform ourſelves to the Image of God, by living to him, and like him, and much above the Rate of common Men? Let not therefore theſe good Reſolutions cool upon your Hands; but be zealous in Piety and Virtue. Conſider that you ſhortly ſhall receive an ample Recompence for all your holy Labours, and ſee a happy End of Grief, and Fear, and Hardſhip. Be content with *Travel and Pain* for a very little while, and *you ſhall be ſure to find Reſt, and Peace, and Joy to your Souls. The Yoke is eaſy and the Burden is light*; but *the Weight of Glory is far more exceeding and eternal.* But be you careful to diſcharge your Part, and then you need never

Rom. xii. 11.

Matth. xi. 28, 30.

2 *Cor.* iv. 16.

never doubt God's making good his. Support and encourage yourself with the full Assurance of obtaining the Crown; but take heed that Assurance do not degenerate into Presumption; nor the Prospect of Bliss, which should excite a more active and chearful Obedience, become an Occasion of Spiritual Security and Sloth.

I remember an Instance of a Person irresolute and wavering in the Concerns of his Soul, divided between Hope and Fear, who in his Prayers was earnestly intreating, to be assured of his own Perseverance; and expressing, how happy he should think himself, could he but be satisfied in this Point. Whereupon he was immediately answered from within, *Well, and supposing you could be assured of this, how would you proceed then? Do but act now, as you would think yourself obliged to do in that Case, and never question your persevering.* This comfortable Reply settled his Mind; and, instead of indulging any curious Enquiries into Events, or anxious Doubts concerning the Success of his Endeavours; he immediately applied himself to consider what God expected from him, and to set about the Performance of That, without more to do. *Trust in the Lord, and be doing good*, says the Psalmist; *commit thy way to him, and he shall bring it to pass.* *Psal.* xxxvii. 5, 6.

The great and common Obstacle to vigorous Virtue is the dreadful Notion Men form to themselves of the Difficulties attending it, and how laborious a Thing Religion is. And true it is, Exalted Piety will cost many a sore Conflict. But even this Consideration may be some Encouragement too; when we consider, that the Hardship of the Undertaking, and the Violence of the Opposition, add to the Glory of the Fight; and entitle the Conqueror to a Crown so much brighter, as the Toil and Hazard of the Day he won, was greater. For the more a Man subdues him-

ſelf, and does Honour to the divine Grace, by rendring it victorious over Fleſh and Blood; the larger Meaſures of that Grace he ſhall obtain from God, and become more exemplary in the World.

There are not, 'tis confeſs'd, in every Man, the ſame Paſſions, or not the ſame degrees of them, to maſter and mortify. But tho' a Man, whoſe Affections are vehement, and his Diſpoſition by Nature or Cuſtom more ſtubborn and averſe to Virtue, hath more to make his Way thro': Yet if this Man's Reſolutions be firmer, and his Vigour be proportionably greater, he ſhall be able to advance farther, than others of a quieter Temper, and leſs rebellious Paſſions, if that Sedateneſs at the ſame Time diſpoſe them to Eaſe and Inactivity.

Now in this Undertaking, Two Things there are, of mighty Moment for promoting it. The *Firſt* is, To obſerve the Tendencies of one's Temper and Conſtitution; and take care to bend Nature the contrary Way, by keeping aloof off from all thoſe Temptations and Occaſions of ſinning, with which we feel ourſelves moſt eaſily beſet, and ſtrongly inclined to comply. The *Other*, to diſcover our peculiar Defects, and labour with all our Might to attain thoſe Virtues, which we chiefly want.

And as this Knowledge of our own Frailties and Neceſſities is greatly inſtrumental to our Improvement, ſo we ſhall do well to profit by what we ſee in Others, and to be particularly concerned for avoiding and ſubduing thoſe Habits, which we find moſt uſual and offenſive, in them with whom we converſe. For the Commonneſs of any ill Thing is ſo far from extenuating the Blame of thoſe who copy after it, that it is the direct contrary; and ſuch Examples ſhould be look'd upon, as Marks which diſcover to us where the Rocks and Sands lie; ſuch as are ſet to warn us off, not to invite us in. Indeed a wiſe and good Man will turn Examples of all Sorts to his own Advantage.

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The Good he will make his Patterns, and strive to equal or excel them. The Bad he will by all Means avoid. Or if by Reflection the Deformity of his Neighbour's Actions happen to represent that of his own, he will be sure to do so no more; and think it a happy Occasion, that he is thus grown wiser by the Folly of others. For we often see and judge that in the Deportment of those we converse with, which too near a Light will not let us discern, or Partiality let us condemn, in our own. And this should make us cautious, when we remember, that the Eyes of others are as sharp, as critical Observers, as severe Judges of Us, and all we do, as ours can possibly be of Them. From this universal Disposition to observe and judge, proceeds, no doubt, that pleasing Approbation, or vehement Dislike of Good and Bad Examples. For what indeed gives us a more sensible Satisfaction, than the seeing Men in every Point agreeable to their Character? When they, who call themselves by the Name of Christ, and pretend in a peculiar Manner to belong and be resigned up to him, are eminent in good Works and heavenly Dispositions; when they submit entirely to his Yoke, and think nothing too much to do or suffer in Obedience to his Will; how charming, how delightful a Sight is this? And again, how offensive, how very shocking, when They, who make the same outward Profession, shall dishonour and defile it by a scandalous and profligate Conversation; and, instead of that severe, that Spiritual and Heavenly Life, to which their very Name, and the Pattern of their Master obliges them, abandon themselves to all manner of Excess, and wallow in the most brutish and detestable Pollutions? But, even where Men do not degenerate into all this Beastliness; where Cares and Business of the World divert and draw them off from better Employments, 'tis unseemly to others, and of ill Consequence to themselves, to neglect their proper Con-

cern, and engage their Thoughts and Time in Matters foreign to their main Design.

Quicken therefore yourself up to Duty, by the Remembrance of your Station, who you are, and what you have obliged yourself to be. Bear constantly about you a lively Idea of Christ crucified. Consider carefully his Life, and let the Perfection of That shame you into the reforming your own: Your own, I say, whose very *Baptism represents your Profession*, which is, *to follow the Example of our Saviour, and to be made like unto him*; and yet after so many Years being called a Christian, you are still too far from being one, if *Dying to Sin, and Living to Righteousness, as your Jesus died and rose again for you*, be that which makes a Christian and distinguishes him from other Men. If Persons dedicated to Piety and Virtue, would but with due Attention fix their Thoughts upon the Actions and Sufferings of Christ, this single Subject would furnish them with Instructions and Motives abundantly sufficient for their Purpose. St. *Paul*, we see, determined to know nothing but *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*; and this indeed, truly known, is the best, the most useful, and most comprehensive Learning.

1 *Cor.* xi.

This fires Men with an eager holy Zeal, and renders them not only exact, but chearful in their Duty; it makes them perform what he commands with Diligence, and suffer all that he ordains with Patience and Contentedness. Whereas a negligent and lukewarm Christian conspires against himself; his Life is one perpetual Torment, for want of entire Resignation and fervent Love. The Trials and Afflictions bear hard upon his Spirit, and the Good he attempts is strained, and against the Grain. He feels not the Support of Spiritual Comforts: he knows he must not have recourse to Worldly ones; Or, if he might, they will not do his Business; and so he is left destitute of all. For

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by transgressing the Rules of Christian Discipline, he hazards the Safety of his Soul; and by seeking Relief in inconvenient Liberties, he creates fresh Torments to himself; because these cannot satisfy his Conscience, but will be sure to leave some Displeasure and Bitterness behind them. And who can ever be easy, who is reproached with his own ill Conduct, and chuses a Remedy worse than the Distemper?

To this Pattern set us by Christ himself, it will be of great Use to add those of the Apostles, and other eminent Lights in the Church heretofore. These will convince us, what Excellencies mere Men are capable of; and if we heartily aspire after their Perfections, we ought not to distrust God's Assistance; but may confidently promise ourselves, that an equal Degree of Zeal will be supported by an equal Measure of Grace and Strength. Observe then their Austerities, their fervent Prayers and heavenly Meditations; observe the great and happy Efficacy of them, in raising those holy Persons above the World and its Temptations, and rendering their Conversation all heavenly and divine, even whilst upon Earth. It were indeed a desirable Thing, that we could so wholly abstract ourselves from Flesh and Sense, that the Praises of God, and Attendance upon his Commands, the Contemplation of his Glories, and the ravishing Satisfaction of devout Minds, might be our constant and only Employment. And happy should we be, if the necessary Cares of Life gave no Distraction to our Thoughts, no Interruption to those holy Exercises. But these are Charms and Joys reserved for a future and better State; We cannot here be so refined, we cannot be excused from the Incumbrances of the Body, and its inseparable Frailties and Necessities. And therefore the Virtue proper to our present Condition is of another Nature. Use these worldly Comforts we may, but we must not place our Happi-

neſs in them; live upon them our Bodies muſt, bu our Souls ſhould reliſh nothing but God. Whatever his Providence thinks fit for us, we are to receive with Meekneſs and Contentedneſs; as being well aſſured, that His Wiſdom *can*, and His Goodneſs *will* chuſe and ordain what is beſt. *In the Day of Proſperity we may rejoice*, but that Joy muſt be ſo tempered with Gratitude and Moderation, as neither to ſwell into Inſolence and Pride, nor to engage our Affections in the Love of the World. *In the Day of Adverſity we are to conſider* and entertain the moſt calamitous Accidents, without Murmuring or Diſcontent. In every Change of Circumſtances, our Minds muſt be entirely reſigned to God; For he is all in all, Eternal and Unchangeable; Perfect and Happy in Himſelf, Abſolute and ſole Lord of the Univerſe; and every Creature is, and ought to be, entirely at his Diſpoſal.

But tho' He be always the ſame, and can, at any time, do what is good in his Sight, yet this is by no means our Caſe. Frail, and of ſhort Continuance is our Character; and this ſhould excite our Diligence, *to work while it is Day, becauſe our Night cometh on apace, wherein no Man can work.* Conſider therefore, you muſt die; die you know not how ſoon; and be afraid leſt that fatal Hour overtake you before the Buſineſs of Life be finiſhed. Remember that the Time once yours, can never be ſo again: The Wealth of both the *Indies* cannot redeem one ſingle Opportunity, which you have once let ſlip; and therefore lay faſt hold on all that offer, and ſuffer no Hour to ſlide by, without its due Improvement.

John ix.

Virtue can never be attained without great Pains and Diligence; and if you cool and linger in this Purſuit, the Moment that you gain not Ground, you loſe it. For the Affairs of our Souls can never ſtand at one Stay; but, as often as we favour ourſelves in point of Duty, we decline and fall back again toward Sin, or

or at leaſt into an Indiſpoſition towards Goodneſs: But if we cheriſh our Zeal, and conſtantly blow up its holy Fires, by a vigorous Attendance upon our Buſineſs, we ſhall ſoon feel the Comfort of this kindly Warmth; and all the Difficulties we found or formed to ourſelves, will wear off quickly. God will give more Grace to him that uſes what he gave formerly, and Virtue every Day will diſcloſe her Charms, and make us more in love with her. Then it is, that the Wife Man's Deſcription is experimentally made good to us, *That her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.* Prov. iii.

I readily acknowledge the Attempt, I am now adviſing, to be exceeding laborious and great: No bodily Toil is to be compared to it; nor any Conqueſt over Temporal Enemies ſo hazardous and expenſive, as that which we gain upon ourſelves, and the Adverſary of Souls. But as the Difficulty exceeds, ſo does the Benefit and Glory likewiſe. This Field muſt be fought, and won, or we are loſt for ever; and He, who does not inure himſelf to vanquiſhing, by ſubduing leſs Temptations, will never be able to grapple with more violent and trying Ones; and Infirmities once yielded to, grow inſenſibly to ſtubborn Habits of Vice. This is a daily Warfare, and we may daily reap the Fruits of it. For every Night will crown us with freſh Laurels, and the Reflection upon a Day well ſpent, furniſh us with Joys more pleaſing than Ten thouſand Triumphs. Since therefore every Day's Behaviour is of ſuch mighty Conſequence, in giving a Turn to our Spiritual Affairs; beware leſt any paſs unprofitably. Watch continually over thyſelf, and let not this neceſſary Fervour abate, for Want of Care to cheriſh and excite it. Remember that your own Salvation is the Truſt committed to your Charge; a Truſt of Importance greater than the whole World; and therefore, whatever becomes of the reſt, do You ſecure One. To admoniſh and reprove your

Brethren, while you overlook yourself, is a most preposterous Course; 'tis neglecting your own Province, and invading another Man's. You have no Right to take the Mote out of *their* Eye, till the Beam be first cast out of *your own*. If then you would escape the Censure of Hypocrisy, begin at Home to reform, and be sure to do that effectually. For the greater Violence you are content to put upon your own Inclinations, and the sorer Conflicts you undergo, the more meritorious is your Virtue, and the more abundant will be your Joy.

Matth. vii.

The End of the first BOOK.

OF

OF THE IMITATION OF Jesus Christ.

The Second Book.

Chap. I.

The Life of the Spiritual Man.

THE Kingdom of God is within you, says our blessed Lord. Betake thyself then entirely to God, love *him* with all thy Heart, and all thy Soul, and bid a final Adieu to this wretched World, and thou shalt find sweet Content, and Comfort unspeakable, Learn to despise these outward Vanities, and seek pure and spiritual Satisfactions. Place all thy Hopes, thy Happiness, thy Thoughts in them, and thou shalt feel this Kingdom spring up and grow within thee. *For the Kingdom of God is Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost:* A joy peculiar to the Saints, in which wicked and worldly-minded Men have no Part. Christ will approach to those that fly to him for Refuge, meet and embrace them in

Luke xvii. 21.

Rom. xiv. 17.

in his Arms, and fill them with his heavenly Consolations. He knocks, and waits to come in, and only stays till thou hast swept and garnish'd thy Soul, and prepared an Apartment, clean and fit for so pure, so divine an Inhabitant. For all his Charms and Glories shine inward. They are not like the Gaudy Pomps and Glittering Outsides of Earthly Ornaments, but lie deep in the Breast of his Saints. There is his Beauty, there his sweet Conversation, there his Ravishing Comforts, there the Abundance of his Peace, and the Intimacy of his Friendship.

Come then, believing Soul, to work; and employ all thy Diligence, to prepare thy Heart for thy Beloved; that Heavenly Spouse, who will not disdain this poor and homely Mansion, and only asks thy Love and Care to make it worthy of him. Hear his own gracious Promise, *If a Man love me, he will keep my Words, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.* Make room then for this Blessed Guest; Cast out the Crowd of worldly Cares and Desires; admit no Partner in thy Breast, but reserve thy whole Heart for this One Inhabitant. This One is enough, for he is all the World; and if thou hast Him, thou hast Riches, and Honour, and Plenty of every thing that is good. He will be thy Master, thy Protector, thy Counsellor, thy Agent, thy Friend, will take thy Cares upon himself, and manage all thy Concerns to the best Advantage; nor shalt thou need any other Assistant, or ask Relief from Men. For why indeed from Men, whose Power is so short, and their Affections so inconstant? They quickly change, and mock the Hopes of those that depend upon their Kindness; but Christ endureth for ever, and is a sure Help in all his Servants Extremities. Supposing all the Sincerity and Zeal for our Service, that Man is capable of; yet still he is but Man, mortal and frail, and cannot always have the Abi-

John xiv. 23.

Ability, even when he hath moſt the Diſpoſition, to relieve and do us good. Since then ſo little Confidence is due to his Succours, the Concern ought not to be great, if he withdraw or deny them; if he oppoſe and grieve, and labour to do us harm. For this is frequently the Caſe, the Effect of a fickle Temper, that the very ſame Perſons, who to Day are our deareſt Friends, to Morrow ſhall be our bittereſt Enemies. And they, who now are our moſt furious Adverſaries, within a little while come over to our Side. It cannot well be otherwiſe, in Perſons ſo unſettled, ſo liable to turn with every Breath of Wind. Place then thy Hope and truſt in him alone, with *whom is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of Turning.* James i. 17. Let *him* be the only Object of thy Fear and Love. In *him* thou art ſure to find a conſtant and powerful Friend; One who will heartily eſpouſe thy Cauſe, and order Matters better than thou thyſelf, if left to thine own Choice, could poſſibly do. Alas! thou haſt here no continuing City, but art a Stranger and Sojourner, and muſt expect to find no Settlement, till poſſeſs'd of, and united to Chriſt.

Why do thy Anxious Thoughts look out for Eaſe and a fixed Happineſs, in a Place which is not, cannot be thy Reſt? Thy Converſation ought to be in Heaven, for there is thy Home; and all Things here ſhould be no otherwiſe regarded, than as Refreſhments and Conveniences given to ſupport thee in thy Journey thither: Things in perpetual Motion, and ſuch as paſs away from thee; and Things which thou thyſelf art paſſing away from too, as faſt as Time and Mortality can carry thee. Do not then imagine, that they can ſtick by Thee, or Thou by them; but look upon them with an Eye of Indifference, and keep thy Soul diſengaged. For if thou ſuffer them to faſten upon thy Affections, they will enſlave thy Mind, and turn to thy eternal Ruin. Aſſert then and preſerve

thy Native Liberty, by raising thy Soul above this vain World, and fixing thy Desires and Meditations upon the most high God. Converse with Christ in Prayer, and let this be so constant, so intent, as to contract an intimate Familiarity with Him.

It may be, His Glories and divine Excellencies are Objects too refined and lofty for thy Contemplations to dwell upon with Relish and sensible Delight. But he hath condescended to thy mean Capacity; and, by becoming Man, afflicted Man, hath furnished us with Matter of Meditation, of a size with our Minds, while dwelling in Flesh. Consider then his Poverty and Sufferings. And if thou canst not soar up so high as Christ sitting on his Throne, behold him hanging on his Cross. Take Sanctuary in his Stripes and Wounds, and Death; those Stripes by which the World is healed; that Death by which Mankind live. And, if these be well attended to, they will administer marvellous Strength and Comfort to thy Adversities; enable thee to bear Wrongs with Ease, Contempt with Patience, Calumny and Detraction with Content. What! was the Son of God a Scorn of Man, and an Outcast of the People? Was the King of Heaven reduced to Wants and Necessities upon Earth, and had not so much as *where to lay his Head?* Was He, who loved his Enemies so tenderly as even to die for them, forsaken by his Friends? Did Christ submit chearfully to endure, and to be despis'd? And dost thou, wretched Sinner, murmur and complain, when Poverty or Contempt come upon thee? when thy Friends desert, or thy Enemies slander thee? Did He undergo the Malice and *Contradiction* of Men, and dost thou expect that all Men should favour, and assist, and speak of Thee with Honour? Nay, wretched Man, entertain not so vain a Hope. It cannot be; it is not fit it should. For couldst thou be exempted from Injuries and Afflictions, what

Luke ix. 58.

Heb. xii. 3.

what Opportunity could there ever be for the Exercise of thy Patience? If nothing cross should happen in the whole Course of thy Life, how could'st thou approve thy Friendship and Love for Christ; How express thy Likeness to him? This the Apostle tells us, is the Condition, This the Way, that leads to Happiness; and they, who desire to Reign with Christ, must not think much to Suffer with him, and for him. *2 Tim.* ii. 11, 12.

Oh! had we but, with *Thomas*, put *our Fingers into the Print of his Nails, and thrust our Hands into his Side*; Had we but acquainted ourselves with his Sufferings, by deep and serious Consideration; and tasted indeed the astonishing Greatness of his Love; the Joys and Miseries of this Life would soon become indifferent to us. Or rather, they would no longer be indifferent, but we should even rejoice in Tribulation, and triumph in the Opposition, and Shame, and wrongful Dealings of Men, which draw us to so much nearer and more lively Resemblance of the Blessed *Jesus*. For the Love of Christ teaches us to despise ourselves; and they, who do so, will bear the Reproaches and Despisings of others with Easiness and Temper. A Man, whose Soul is united to Christ in fervent Love, and who hath freed himself from Passions and Worldly Solicitudes: This Man, I say, is as it were spiritualiz'd, can have recourse to God without Distraction, lives in a manner by, and within, himself; nay, is raised above himself, and enjoys Heaven, while yet upon Earth. He that hath shook off the Fallacies and Prepossessions of Sense, that sees and judges Things, not after the deceitful Measures of Common Opinion, but by the Standard of Truth, and their own Nature; He is the Wise, the truly Learned Man, and he is taught this Wisdom, not by Human Methods, but by Instructions from above, from God the Fountain and Perfection of all Wisdom. *John* xx.

This Man can never want Opportunities of enjoying and improving his Happineſs. The Interruptions, which common Men lament, cannot affect him. For nothing can take him from himſelf; and ſo long as he hath his own Breaſt to retire into, he cannot be deprived of a fit Place, and proper Seaſon, for any holy Exerciſe. If Buſineſs and the World at any time call him abroad, he always acts and converſes there with cautious Reſerve, and keeps it in his Power to recollect and retreat again at Pleaſure. Bodily Labour is no Hindrance, for this employs but the leaſt Part of him; the Cares of Life he never lays himſelf out upon; but ſuits his Temper to his preſent Circumſtances, and only ſtudies to keep his Mind eaſy and compoſed: The Unreaſonableneſs, and Folly, and unaccountable Perverſeneſs of other Mens Humour and Behaviour give him no Diſturbance, for he is taken up with his own. In ſhort, Every Man finds more or leſs Vexation and Obſtruction in the Affairs of his Soul, as he engages himſelf more or leſs in the World; and as he chuſes or refuſes to make thoſe things his Care, which are not properly ſo.

A Man, whoſe Mind is purify'd from the Droſs of Earth, and diſpoſed as it ought to God and heavenly Things, will find that every Accident of Life contributes to his Advantage. For the true Reaſon of our Paſſion and Diſquiet, when Things fall out contrary to our Expectations or Deſires, is the want of that Reſignation and Temper, which never fails to compoſe the Spirit of Men, mortify'd to themſelves and the World, and diſengaged from the Vanities and falſe Appearances of Happineſs here below. Nothing ſo infects and defiles, ſo entangles and perplexes a Man's Mind, as a ſordid Love of the Creatures. But when we can once prevail with ourſelves to deſpiſe theſe trifling, theſe deluding Comforts without us, our Retirements into our own Breaſts will be frequent, and

and free; our Joys resulting from them undisturbed; and our Contemplations of Heaven and Heavenly Things full of Rapture and Transport.

Chap. II.

The Advantage of Humility.

BE not extremely solicitous what Friends thou hast to appear in thy Behalf, nor what Foes employ their Malice in creating thee Difficulty and Trouble; But let it be thy great Care to keep God thy Friend and Helper, and be sure to preserve a Good Conscience; for, so long as thy own Heart condemns thee not, God will not fail to plead thy Cause, and assist and bless thy Righteous Undertakings. And those whom he receives into his peculiar Protection, no Wickedness or Spite shall be able to hurt. Suffer thou may'st indeed, but provided thou learn to suffer without Murmuring and Impatience, thou shalt certainly see the Salvation of God. And if this seem to tarry, yet wait for it; for He best knows the proper Season of Deliverance, and therefore you ought entirely to rest upon his Wise Disposal. Deliver no doubt he will: The relieving Men in Distress, and wiping off the Shame and Reproach of his Servants, being Acts by which God delights to signalize his Providence. But there is often Reason, why the doing it should be deferred; since the Discovery of our Failings by other People, and the Reproofs we meet with upon their Account, have frequently a very happy Effect upon our Minds, and render them more modest and humble in their own Esteem of themselves.

And Humility is a Virtue of so general, so exceeding good Influence, that we can scarce purchase it too dear.

dear. For he, who is lowly in his own Eyes, and sensible of his own Failings, makes no difficulty to acknowledge his Offences against his Neighbour, and gives all reasonable Satisfaction to any who have cause to be angry at him. Nor does this Forwardness to Reconciliation expose him to the Insults of Injurious Men; for God charges his Providence with a peculiar Protection of the Humble, and delivers such as are of a contrite Spirit. He condescends to dwell with the Humble, and hath engaged to comfort their holy Sorrows. To these he promises large Portions of his Grace, and that, *they who abase themselves shall afterwards be exalted:* To these he reveals his Secrets, and draws them to himself with the Cords of Love and Kindness. The Humble suffers no Disturbance of Mind, but receives the Reproaches and Affronts of Men without any great Impression. For he considers, that God, and not the World, is his Hope; and if his Favour be but secured, the rest cannot be of any very great Importance. In short, this Virtue is so necessary, so fundamental a one, that no Man ought to esteem himself a Proficient in Goodness, who is not yet arrived to that Pitch of it, which teaches him to think himself the least of all Saints, and last of all Men.

Luke xiv. *Psal.* xxv.

Chap. III.

The Peace-maker.

SEcure Peace at Home in the first place; and, when thy own Breast is thus composed, it will then be proper to Reconcile and make Peace among thy Neighbours. And this indeed is a very worthy and reputable Action; it brings greater and juster Commendation

mendation to a Man, and more Benefit to those with whom he converses, than Wit, or Learning, or any of those other so much admired Accomplishments. And as every thing is set off by its Contrary, so here, the Mischief of a contentious Disposition is unconceivable. For nothing can be so innocent, nothing so well or kindly meant, but such a Man will be sure to fix some ill Interpretation upon it: But the good Temper will be as careful, on the other hand, to take every thing in the best Sense it is capable of. For a peaceable Man is not apt to suspect Ill of any; but the Peevish and Discontented are rack'd and tormented with a thousand jealous Whimsies, and neither are quiet themselves, nor content to let other People be so. They are very liberal in saying what they should not; and as backward in doing what they should. Diligent Observers of their Neighbour's Duty, and scandalously negligent of their own. Whereas, in truth, our Saviour's Rule should always be our Measure; for no Man is fit to Censure or Correct his Brother, by pulling *the Mote out of his Eye*, till he have first exercised a due Severity upon himself, and be effectually reformed, by casting *the Beam out of his own Eye*. And oh! how happy should we be, how eased of Detraction, and Calumny, and Censoriousness, if none would take upon them to Condemn or Censure others, till they were first qualified for the Authority they usurp, by a thorough Amendment of their own Manners, and being Proof against any just Reprehension themselves?

Who can forbear the observing, how manifestly unequal we are in our Dealings? Every one is ingenious at framing Excuses, and making large Allowances for what he doth himself; and yet scarce any Body admits the Apologies alledged by others in their own Vindication. How much more just and reasonable were our Proceedings, would we but pass a favour-

able Conſtruction upon the Actions of others, and turn the Severity of our Cenſure upon our own? If you expect to be borne with, you muſt firſt learn to bear with your Brethren, and exerciſe the good Nature you expect, as oft as Occaſion offers. For Men are beſt taught by Examples, and the Meaſure we mete gives us a Right to receive the ſame again. But is this Charity? Is this Humility? Nothing more diſtant from it. For theſe diſpoſe us to condemn, and be angry with no body but ourſelves. To keep up a good Underſtanding with Men of Goodneſs and Temper, is but a very vulgar Virtue. This is eaſy and delightful, for every Man naturally deſires Quiet and good Uſage, and cannot help being well affected to Perſons who love, and pleaſe, and are like him. The Difficulty is, to carry Matters ſmooth and inoffenſively with Men of rugged, intractable, and fierce Diſpoſitions; with thoſe who make little Conſcience of what they do or ſay, and ſtick at nothing unjuſt or unfair in their Dealings. And he who can do this, is a truly great Soul, and ſets a noble and commendable Pattern of Philoſophical, or which is more, of Chriſtian Fortitude.

There are a ſort of Men, who cheriſh Peace and Quiet with themſelves and all the World; and another very vile ſort of Wretches, the very Reverſe of theſe, who delight to fiſh in troubled Waters, and are neither eaſy, nor will ſuffer any body elſe to be ſo; eternally troubleſome to others, but much more tormenting and vexatious to themſelves. And there are yet a Third Sort, who are not ſatisfy'd with giving no Offence, but make it their Buſineſs to reconcile others, where it hath been given; and to reſtore that Peace, which they were never inſtrumental in diſturbing. But when all is done, our Life here is expoſed to perpetual Miſery and Contention; and the utmoſt Degree of Peace we muſt expect to arrive at, does not conſiſt in being free from Injuries and Croſſes,

but

but in bearing them with Humility, and not being provoked to Impatience and uneasy Resentments. And therefore, the more any Man hath brought himself to suffer, and the better he entertains Afflictions and Wrongs, the more serene his Mind will be. For this Person hath gained a Conquest over himself, is above the Reach of Fortune, hath the World at his Command, is a Friend of Christ, and an Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Chap. IV.

Purity and Sincerity.

THERE are two Wings by which a Man soars above the World, Sincerity and Purity. The former regards the Intention, the latter the Affections; That aspires and aims at a Likeness to God; This makes us really like him. We should find no Difficulty in any good Action, were but our Minds free from all intemperate Passion and Desire. And this Perfection of Freedom we should not fail to attain, did we, in all our Designs and Undertakings, propose no other Ends than Obedience to the Will of God, and promoting the Good of our Neighbour. Were but our Minds thus fixed, and our Intentions regulated, every thing would strangely contribute to our Edification. We should study the Volume of Nature with Profit, and every Line in that large Book would tend to our Instruction. The very smallest, and, in common Esteem, most despicable Creature would represent, as in a Glass, the Goodness of God to us. And the Reason why these things are seen with so useless Speculation, is, because our Minds are not rightly disposed, to draw those Profitable and Practical Inferences,

which very naturally result from them. For, as Colours appear to our Minds as they are painted in the Eye, so the Judgment Men make of all outward Objects, depends upon the Condition of the Mind. And we argue and pronounce of them differently, as we happen to be differently affected before-hand.

If there be such a Thing as true Pleasure in this World, the Pure in Heart enjoy it. And if there be a Hell upon Earth, it dwells in that Man's Breast, who hath a guilty and polluted Conscience. As Iron is scoured from the Rust by Fire, and becomes bright and new; so that Zeal, by which we renounce the World, and turn entirely to God, takes off our Filth, and changes us into new Men. The luke-warm and indifferent Christian grudges every thing he does, boggles at every Difficulty, and seeks his Satisfaction in worldly and outward Comforts. But if he warmly apply himself to subdue his Passions, and resolutely attempt the following God in his own Way, the Hardships which at first discouraged him, grow familiar, and lessen upon his Hands. All that God appoints him to do or suffer, becomes sensibly to him an *easy Yoke and a light Burthen*, and *he finds Peace and Rest to his Soul*,

Matth. xi. 29, 30.

Chap. V.

Know Thy Self.

IT is a very usual Thing with us, to have a mighty Confidence in ourselves; when alas! the Want both of Abilities and Performance reproves our Vanity and Folly. For how small is the Proportion of our Gifts, in Comparison of our own Imaginations concerning them? And how defective our Wisdom and Care

to

to use and improve even that Proportion we have? The Light that is in us shines but dimly, and by our Neglect we suffer it to go quite out. We are often blind, and not sensible of our Infirmities; we stumble and fall, and still pretend we see; commit horrible Sins; aggravate our Guilt by defending what we have done; nay, are sometimes so wretchedly deluded. as even to sanctify our Wickedness by a Pretence of Zeal. The smallest Faults of others seldom escape our Censure; and the much greater of our own as seldom fall under our Observation. The Burthens and Hardships we put upon them, seem reasonable, easy, and light; but the least and most trivial Uneasiness they create to Us, we have a quick and painful Sense of, and cry out, *Who can bear it?* Whereas, would we but take a right Estimate of ourselves, and judge our own Actions impartially, we should find little Leisure and less Provocation, to pronounce severely concerning our Brethren.

Now this is the wise and truly Spiritual Man's Method: He employs his Thoughts at home, considers that there lies his proper Business and Care; and is tender of other People's Failings, from a due and humble Consciousness of his own. And whatever fond Opinions we may cherish of our own Virtue, Religious and Perfect we are not, nor ever can be, till we examine our own Consciences diligently, and leave all the rest of the World to stand and fall by the Judgment of their own Master. Censoriousness and Christian Piety can never dwell together. For this would work us to a neglect of all things without us, and make us both forbear and despise all Judging, but those of God and our own Consciencies. The Mind, which does not converse with itself, is an idle Wanderer, and all the Learning in the World is fruitless and misemploy'd, whilst in the midst of his boasted Knowledge, a Man continues in profound Ignorance of that,

which in point both of Duty and Advantage he is moſt concerned to know. True Peace and Satisfaction of Mind can only be acquired by doing our own Buſineſs; and Friendſhip and Charity are beſt preſerved, by leaving off all impertinent and buſy Curioſity, concerning the Conduct and Reputation of our Neighbours.

The abandoning all worldly Care, is a true Argument of greater Proficience in Goodneſs. For, by eſteeming highly of any thing here below, our value for God and Heaven is unavoidably leſſened and impaired. Let nothing therefore but God, and the things that be of God, ſeem great or grateful to thee, worthy deſiring, or rejoicing in. And all that imaginary Comfort, which the Creatures pretend to adminiſter, treat with the generous Neglect and Contempt that it deſerves. For a Soul entirely devoted to the Love of God, will naturally deſpiſe every thing in compariſon of Him. And Reaſon good there is why it ſhould do ſo, when we conſider, that every thing elſe is frail and of ſhort Continuance, empty and unſatisfactory; but God alone Eternal, Omnipreſent, Infinite in every Excellence; and therefore he is the beſt, he the only Comfort and true Joy of the Soul, who alone can fill and exceed its largeſt Deſires.

Chap. VI.

The Joy of a good Conſcience.

THE Glory and Privilege of a good Man conſiſts in the Teſtimony of his own Mind; For this is a perpetual Feaſt and Triumph. It ſets him above the Power of Fortune, and makes the ſharpeſt Afflictions not only an Exerciſe of his invincible Patience, but a Matter

Matter of undisturbed Joy to him. Whereas even Prosperity itself cannot procure Ease and Content to a guilty and self-condemning Breast. Would'st thou then enjoy a sweet and uninterrupted Tranquility? Keep all at Peace within, and give thy own Thoughts no Cause to reproach thee. All the Satisfaction we take or promise ourselves, is vain and dangerous, except that only which proceeds from a Sense of having done our Duty. The Men thou seest so gay, so seemingly full of Delight, are galled and stung within; they have no inward, no true Contentment; and notwithstanding their most industrious Pursuits of Pleasure, that Sentence of God is irreversible, and the sad Effects of it hang over their Hearts, that *there is no Peace to the Wicked.* They may perhaps make mighty Boasts of their Enjoyments, put on an Air of Happiness, give out that their Pomp and Greatness secures them from the Assaults of Misery; but these are all Delusions, and ought not to incline our Assent, or provoke our Envy. We see not their inward Tortures; nor are Witnesses of those Checks and Terrors, which make Retirement bitter and insupportable, and haunt their Closets and their Beds: We see not yet, but there is a Time coming when we shall see an angry God breaking out upon them in Fury; their mighty Projects quashed and baffled, and all the Happiness they vainly boasted of, vanish like a Dream. *Isa.* lvii. 21.

While therefore these Men take a Pride in their Successes and outward Enjoyments, do Thou with equal Satisfaction entertain thy Afflictions. This is not indeed to Flesh and Blood an easy Undertaking; but to a Soul filled with Grace and Love, which knows and proposes to itself no other Happiness but God, nothing is impracticable, nothing difficult. For what is this, but to rejoice in the Fatherly Care and Affection of Him, whose Providence ordereth these Suf-

ferings for thy Good? The Glory which we give or receive from one another, is very fickle and perishing; it cannot last long, and while it does, some Alloy of Sorrows will ever attend and damp it. The Good Man's Glory stands upon stronger Foundations; it rises from within, and must endure so long as that Innocence which creates it: Nay, it must last as long as God himself; for his Will carefully performed, his Favour and Approbation which follows that Performance, are the solid Bases on which it stands: And these can never fail, so long as Truth and Justice continue impregnable. To him who aspires after Eternal Glory and Honour, that of this World is of very little Consideration. And these are so very different, so inconsistent, that the Love and sincere Desires of the One are best proved by a Neglect and Disesteem of the Other, Nay, not only the future, but the present Happiness is best secured by seeking the Approbation of God alone: For nothing contributes more to an easy and quiet Mind than a Disregard of the Praise, and despising the Censures and Reproaches of Men.

A pure and quiet Conscience does above all things dispose a Man to rest contented with his Condition: And particularly, with regard to the Opinion of the World, it is highly reasonable he should do so. For what is any one really the better, or the worse, for what other People say of him? Their Commendations add nothing to his Virtue, nor does their Dispraise and Scandal take one whit from it. The Man is still the same; what his own Actions and the Judgment of God make him. This is the Standard of our Worth and Happiness; neither more nor less belongs to us, than will be found to do so at the last great Account; and that will depend, not upon what we were said or supposed to be, but upon what in very deed we were in this World. The more Respect therefore we bear to

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the Condition of our own Minds, the leſs Impreſſion will the Characters and Reports of Men make upon us. For God ſeeth not as Men ſee; they obſerve the Face and outward Appearance, but he ſearcheth and underſtands the Heart. They look upon the Action, and form a Judgment from thence; He ſees our Intentions, and condemns or acquits us according to our Honeſty and Sincerity, or corrupt Inclinations and wicked Deſigns. And therefore a Modeſt Humble Man makes it his conſtant Care to be doing Good, and to think meanly of his own Performances. He ſeeks, nay, he feels no great Matter of Comfort, from any of the Advantages which attend Well-doing in this World; but conſiders whom he ſerves, and for whoſe ſake he does it, and chearfully relies upon *him* alone, for the Praiſe and Reward of that which beſt deſerves it. And when we are not anxiouſly concerned for the Teſtimony and Credit of Men, then may we truly be ſaid to have reſigned ourſelves to God, and to depend upon Him, with that ſtedfaſt and holy Confidence which becomes us. *Not he that commendeth himſelf* (no, nor he whom others commend neither) *is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.* 2 *Cor.* x. 18. And therefore a Holy and Spiritual Man indeed lays aſide, as much as may be, all Concern with the World. He conſiders that God is the only Perſon whom he ſhould labour to pleaſe; and while he is happy in his Approbation, and the Witneſs of a good Conſcience, all outward Accidents are conſidered, as Things remote, and foreign to his main Deſign; and ſuch as ought not much to affect him.

Chap.

Chap. VII.

Of Loving Jesus above all Things.

BLessed is that Man indeed, who feels and relishes the Love of Jesus; who finds the Sweet of this Love, and can even despise and hate himself for his Saviour's sake. For, tho' the Love of ourselves be the very Voice of Reason and Nature, yet the same Voice commands us too, to quit a less valuable Friend for a better. And this Exchange he hath made necessary to our Obedience, who requires us, to love him only, above all Things. And He alone is worthy of our Love. For the Objects of this World, which are too apt to engage our Affections, are uncertain and deceitful; but Christ is Faithful and Eternal, and will not fail to return and reward our Love. He that depends upon any Temporal Comfort, will one Day be convinc'd of its Frailty to his Cost, when He and it both perish together; but Jesus remaineth for ever. And as he cannot perish himself, so neither will he suffer any to perish, who depend upon *him*. Let *him* then be your Hope, your Joy, your Love, whose Friendship and whose Power are everlasting. Tho' all Things forsake you, yet will not He; nay, all Things else will certainly forsake you, but even then He will be All, and more than all the World to you.

Living and dying then, keep close and stedfast to Him, for he in Life and Death will be to you Advantage. But then his Friendship and constant Protection depends upon this Condition, That you admit no Rival into Competition with him. He will not accept divided Affections, but expects to reign supreme and sole Lord of your Hearts; and the only way of inviting him thither, is to cast out all other Inmates, and let him have the whole House to himself, And indeed, when

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we come to consider and compute Matters justly, whatever Love or Regard we have allowed to any thing but Him, will be found in a manner perfectly lost and thrown away. Do not therefore indulge a Passion, which can turn to no Account. Lean not upon a broken Reed, which will not only let thee fall, but pierce thy Arm too. And such a Reed is mortal Man, *For all Flesh is Grass, and all the Glory thereof flourisheth as a Flower of the Field; The Grass withereth, and the Flower fadeth*; And they who are enamour'd with its Beauty, find how poor and transitory, how empty and deceitful a Good they set their Hearts upon. Where-ever else we expect Comfort, our Hopes are soon blasted, or wretchedly disappointed: But when our Thoughts and Wishes centre in Jesus, we are sure to find what we look for, sure to obtain all that we did, more than we could, expect. Think not to find Satisfaction in thyself: for the better you understand yourself, the less Cause you will find to love yourself; and the more you indulge this Love, the greater and more certain will be your Ruin. Seek then thy Lord and only Saviour; for he who hath Christ, possesses all Things: And he who neglects him, does himself more Mischief than all the Enemies, nay, all this World, and all the Powers of Hell, could ever bring upon him.

1 *Pet.* i. 24.

CHAP.

Chap. VIII.

Of Intimate Converſation, and Friendſhip with JESUS.

While Jeſus is preſent by his Grace and Comfort, nothing is hard to do, nothing grievous to ſuffer; but Happineſs and perfect Peace dwell and reign in my Breaſt. But the Moment he withdraws his chearing Preſence, all my Supports are loſt and gone, all my Faculties diſabled, and every Difficulty inſuperable, every Croſs inſupportable. The Conſolations of this World make no Impreſſion, nor give any ſolid Joy, while he continues ſilent; but let *him* ſpeak one ſingle Word of Comfort to the Soul, and ſhe is gay in the midſt of Diſtreſſes. Thus *Mary* roſe immediately, and dried up her Tears, upon the News of his Approach, and the firſt Call of her dear Maſter. And happy ſure was ſhe, happy is every Mortal in this Vale of Tears, whom Jeſus calls. For whom he calls and commands to come to him, he calls from Grief and Mourning to true Joy. How flat and inſipid, how harſh and unpleaſant is all we are, and all we have, without this Heavenly Comforter? How empty and deluding all thoſe Wiſhes and Deſires, which are placed upon any other Object? They bid us infinitely to our Loſs. A Loſs greater and more irretrievable, than if we loſt the whole World. For could we gain the whole World with the Loſs of him, it were a fooliſh and moſt miſerable Exchange. And what indeed is all the World without him? To be deprived of this one Friend, is bitterer than Death; To enjoy and poſſeſs him, the only Happineſs of Life. His Friendſhip is Security ſufficient againſt a whole World of Enemies: A Treaſure above all the Riches of the Univerſe. He who finds this, hath more than both

John xi.

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the *Indies*; and he who loſes it, loſes more than can be expreſſed. But why do I ſay more? He loſes all. For this is Poverty indeed, this the only Poverty, to loſe the only true Riches.

So all-ſufficient, ſo delightful, ſo heavenly ſweet, is the Friendſhip and Company of Jeſus. But every Man is not qualified for ſo precious a Bleſſing, for it requires great Care, and Skill, and Wiſdom, to be fit for this Enjoyment. Humility and Charity muſt make and keep him ours. Piety and Peace are the Diſpoſitions he delights in. Sin, and Paſſion, and worldly Affections, will drive him away. And if he takes his Flight, where, wretched Man, where wilt thou find a Friend? Without a Friend thou canſt not live in Comfort? and if he be not thy only Friend, thou art left deſolate and forlorn. Conſider then, how miſerable thou makeſt thyſelf, by placing thy Confidence, or thy Joy, in any other. For better were it far, that the whole World ſhould bend their utmoſt Spite againſt thee, than this one Friend be provoked to Diſpleaſure. If therefore Relations and Acquaintance be dear, yet let none be ſo, comparably to thy God and Saviour. Remember, they are dear for *his* Sake, but he for his own. For this is the peculiar Prerogative of Chriſt, that Enemies, as well as Friends, ſhould challenge a Share in thy Affections upon his Account. Thou art to forgive and love, to pity and pray for all Mankind, becauſe *he* loves them all; and it ought to be the earneſt Deſire of our Hearts, that all may know, and be ſenſible of his Love, and make ſome ſuitable Returns for ſuch wonderful Goodneſs. But neither we nor any other Perſon have a Right to be loved for our ownſelves; for the Foundation of Love is Excellence and Goodneſs; and this is all from God. In him alone it dwells originally, inherently, independently; and what Proportion ſoever any Creature hath, is entirely derived from him, the Emanation of that univerſal and inexhauſtible

hauſtible Source. And therefore he alone hath Right to command our Love for his own Excellence, becauſe all Excellence is his; He alone is to be loved above all others, becauſe he neither hath, nor can have any Equal. Covet not then the Praiſe or Love of Men, for Praiſe and Love are God's Peculiar. Nor laviſhly diſpenſe theſe to others, but in thyſelf, and all Perſons of Virtue and Merit, laud, and admire, and love, the Graces of Chriſt.

Bring to thy Lord a clean and upright Spirit, free from the ſordid Affections of the World; that thou may'ſt be entirely his, and ſolace thyſelf with the Delights of his Converſation. But leave the World, and come to him, thou canſt not, without the Prevention and Aſſiſtance of his Grace. This only can exalt thy Deſires, and draw and charm thy Heart with the Cords of divine Love. For Man can *do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengthens him*; but if that Succour be withdrawn, he is blind and naked, deſtitute and weak, full of Confuſion and Torment; or rather, he is Confuſion in the Abſtract, Weakneſs and Impotence in itſelf. And if ſometimes thou feel an inward Scourge, let not thy melancholy Thoughts deject or drive thee to Deſpair. For Spiritual Comforts and Joys are ſown in Tears; and Patience brings forth plentiful and perfect Fruits of Righteouſneſs and Peace. If theſe Sorrows proceed from a Reflection upon thy own Sins and Infirmities, indulge the holy Grief; and lament, as becomes a ſerious Penitent, thy own Unworthineſs, and former Miſery. If Adverſities ſent from the Hand of God afflict thee, ſupport thyſelf with the Conſolations of a good Conſcience; and be aſſured, that ſuffering ſo as may advance thy Maſter's Honour, will end in Glory and Advantage to thyſelf. But conſider, that, in either Caſe, the Trouble cannot be long; for theſe black Intervals of Sadneſs will as certainly, as naturally, be followed with inward

Phil. iv.

inward Peace and Joy, as Summer ſucceeds Winter, and Storms are huſhed into a profound Calm.

Chap. IX.

The Diſconſolate State.

When all human Comforts forſake us, if God vouchſafe to ſupply their Place with Spiritual and Heavenly, which are infinitely better; we are not much to wonder, if the Soul preſerve its Temper, and bear up manfully under ſuch Circumſtances. But when the World and God both frown, then to bear ſuch Deſertion with Patience, and be content to be abandoned of all our Hopes for his Glory; then to acknowledge our Unworthineſs, and not charge God fooliſhly, nor be partial to our ſuffering ſelves; this is Virtue and Reſignation indeed, the very Excellence and Perfection of an humble and ſubmiſſive Mind. Who that conſiders, can forbear rejoicing, while the chearful Light of God's Countenance ſhines bright about him? What Wretch is ſo unreaſonable to grudge his Service, when Bounty and Bleſſings reward his Pains, and convince him that he does not ſerve God for nought? This is the happy Seaſon, which every Man deſires and triumphs in. Smooth and pleaſant is his Paſſage, whom the Grace of God conducts and carries thro' this troubleſome World. For, how can we think it ſtrange, that he ſhould not feel the Weight of his Burthen, who is ſtrengthened and ſupported by Almighty Power, and led thro' Difficulties and Dangers by the Captain of his Salvation?

It is natural for us to cling faſt about any Thing that may give us Eaſe; and hard for a Man to diveſt himſelf of carnal Affections; ſo that, before our Paſſions

ſions be effectually ſubdued, and our Delight and Hope fixed entirely upon God, many and frequent Conflicts muſt be undergone. And yet at no Expence leſs than this, is our Peace and Quiet to be purchaſed. For ſo long as a Man reſts upon his own Strength, he is eaſily diverted to worldly Comforts, and taſtes little Satisfaction but what ariſes from ſuch. But he whoſe Soul is enamoured with God and Goodneſs, expects not his Delight from ſenſual Enjoyments, but finds a Pleaſure in the ſeverer Exerciſes of Virtue and Devotion, and even enjoys the Difficulties he undergoes for Chriſt's Sake.

If then God ſhed down Spiritual Comforts from Above, entertain the precious Gifts with Humility and Thanks; and loſe not the Effect and Reward of Grace, by ſuppoſing it your Due, or valuing yourſelf upon it. Rejoice in the Bleſſing; but temper that Joy with Gratitude. Let it not ſwell to Inſolence and Vanity, to Cenſoriouſneſs, or Contempt of thy weaker Brethren; but the more thou haſt received, the greater let thy Modeſty be; and the more thy Fear, thy Diligence and Watchfulneſs, that thou abuſe not ſuch gracious Liberality. For Comfort and Gladneſs will not laſt always; a Cloud will come betwixt, and interrupt the chearful Beams of the Sun of Righteouſneſs. Temptations will have their Turn too; and therefore, when theſe fall hard and heavy, let Patience and Humility, not hopeleſs Deſpondency, be the Effect of ſuch Oppreſſions. The Greatneſs of thy Sufferings muſt inflame thy Truſt, thy Zeal, thy Devotion; and fervent Prayer is the proper Weapon againſt the Attacks of our Spiritual Adverſary. For Matters are not deſperate. He who took away his Supports, only withdraws them for a Seaſon, and to thoſe who ſeek them with holy Perſeverance, will at a fit, (that is, at his own) Time, reſtore them again with Advantage. This is an uſual Thing with God. The Prophets and

Saints

Saints of old have all advanced to their Crowns, by the same rough Way of Grief and Desertion. Nor may we suppose, that these Disconsolate Intervals are the Effects of God's Anger and final Abdication of us.

Observe how eminent an Instance of these Changes we have in *the Man after God's own Heart*. When the Grace and Favour of God was lifted up upon him, his Mind was exalted proportionably: *In my Prosperity, I said, I shall never be cast down, thou, Lord, of thy Goodness, hast made my Hill so strong.* *Psalm* xxx. 6. When this Favour was withdrawn, he confesses the Consequence of it, the deep and heavy Impression it made upon his Spirits, *Thou didst turn thy face from me, and I was troubled.* 7. But yet this Trouble, sharp and sensible as it was, did not sink down into Despair. His Remedy was Prayer, *Then cried I unto thee, O Lord, and got me to my Lord right humbly.* 8. And how successful this Application proved, himself declares, *The Lord heard me, and had Mercy upon me; thou hast turned my Mourning into Dancing, thou hast put off my Sackcloth and girded me with Gladness.* 10, 11. Now, if these Sorrows were the Portion of those bright Patterns of Piety; if God's dearly beloved Children and faithfullest Servants, have not lived constantly under his propitious Smiles; if Men of so exalted Virtue were yet differently affected, as they felt different Dispensations of Providence toward them, what are we poor, we weak, desertless Wretches, that we should expect to be exempted from Troubles? What is our Zeal in comparison of Theirs, that we should hope to have it always warm, always gay? What have we done to confine the kindly Influences of that Spirit, and secure them constant to ourselves, which even to those that use and improve it best, *goes and comes, and blows only where and when it listeth?* *John* iii. 8. And therefore *Job*

takes Notice of it, as a Fate common to all Mankind, that God does not so magnify, or set his Heart upon any one among them, but that *he visits him every Morning, and tries him every Moment.* *Job* vii. 17, 18.

Where therefore can we safely place our Confidence, except in the Grace and Mercy of God only? All other Comforters are miserable. The Company and Exhortation of Religious Men, the tender and affectionate Advice of Dear and Faithful Friends, the Entertainment of good Books, the moving Strains of pious Eloquence, the heavenly Raptures of Psalms and Hymns, All these administer but very poor and slender Relief, to assuage the Anguish of our Minds, or but so much as to divert and deceive our Pain; if God withdraw his Consolations, and leave us to the desolate Condition of merely Human Helps. Then, as our last and best Refuge, we must fly to God; humble ourselves under his mighty Hand; submit to what he lays upon us; acknowledge his Goodness even in our Sufferings: and be content to suffer still, so long as he sees fit; for he will not see fit to continue his Displeasure for ever, but will revive the Contrite, and exalt the Humble in due Time.

I never yet, to the best of my Remembrance, met with any remarkable good Man, who had not, at some time or other, fallen into these Discomforts; and languished under the Apprehension of God's Displeasure, or the Abatement of his own Zeal. Nor was it ever designed, that any Man in this Life should arrive at so exalted a State of Holiness, and absolute Safety, as not to be sometimes tempted. Though this happens at very different Times: For some have their Trials in the Beginning of their Conversion, which are reserved for Others to their latter and more perfect Days. It seems, the sublime and rapturous Contemplations of God, are a Blessing too precious for those, who have not first endured some Trouble of Mind, to qualify them

them for so excellent a Reward. Well then may we Rejoice in these Temptations, which are ordained certain Forerunners of more abundant Grace, and Signs of those unspeakable Consolations and Delights, which are reserved for them that have approved themselves Faithful. For not to him that is excused from Fighting, but *to him that overcometh* by striving courageously, and endureth to the End, *will I give to eat of the Tree of Life.* *Rev.* ii. 7.

Most wisely therefore are these Vicissitudes of Prosperity and Adversity appointed for the Improvement of our Piety and Virtue. Were our Troubles without Intermission, no Flesh could be saved; and therefore God softens and rewards them with inward and heavenly Comforts, that so, assisted by his Grace, and encouraged by his Favour, we may be able to bear up against our sharpest Trials. But, were that Grace and Favour constant too, we should be immoderately exalted with our Performances, and impute the Blessings of God to our own Merit. And therefore the Returns of Affliction, and Spiritual Desertion, are convenient, to prevent or check our Pride. They shew us, that how greatly soever we may value ourselves, yet we are not so perfect, but that we deserve to suffer; and the Good we receive, we receive not of Debt, but of Liberality and free Grace. Mistake not, Man, the Devil never sleeps. He always watches for an Opportunity to assault, and work thee Mischief. The Flesh is not utterly dead, nor its Appetites and Passions so totally extinct, but that every fresh Object will awaken them into Lust. Be Thou therefore awake too, and prepare every Day for some new Conflict: Speak not Peace to thyself, when beset on every Side with numerous and restless Enemies; for wretched is thy Case, if their Violence be suffered to bear thee down, or their subtle and wakeful Malice surprize thee into Sin.

Chap. X.

Thankfulneſs for God's Mercies.

MAN is born to Trouble as the Sparks fly upward; and doſt thou refuſe the Condition of Nature, by hoping to be exempted from Labour and Suffering? Conſider this, and apply thyſelf vigorouſly to Patience, as a moſt neceſſary Virtue; and learn to bear the Croſs, as the Buſineſs thou art created for. For this will much better become a ſinful Creature, than to depend upon Comforts, which thou deſerveſt not, and Pleaſures which belong not to thee. Could even the Worldly-minded be ſecure of Spiritual Joys without Interruption, he could not, in Agreement with his own Principle, but be paſſionately fond of them, as yielding more ſubſtantial Satisfaction, than all external and ſenſual Delight. For what Compariſon can there be between thoſe Pleaſures, which are attended with Shame, or Deceit; and thoſe which are ſolid and durable, void of Reproach and Indecency, the Fruits of Virtue, and the ſpecial Gift of God to chaſte and heavenly Souls? This then were *Epicuriſm* indeed, were this to be attained and preſerved by any the moſt aſſiduous Care of ours. But that which renders even theſe Joys leſs ſenſible, and leſs eagerly deſired, is, that they are the Free Gift of God, who both diſpenſes and withdraws them as himſelf ſees fit, and frequently ſuſpends the Happineſs they bring, by ſtrong and ſevere Trials. For we are in a State of continual Diſcipline and Warfare, and our Conflicts muſt return very thick upon us, ſo long as we remain in ſuch a State.

Job v. 7.

Nor are theſe Difficulties from the Malice of our Enemies only, but we ourſelves contribute to our own Miſery, and obſtruct the more liberal Communications

cations of Divine Grace and Comfort, by affecting a mistaken Freedom, and extravagant Conceits of our own Strength and Goodness. The Bounty of God is admirable, who supports us with the inward Satisfactions of his Spirit; but the Folly of Man is prodigious, who does not discern, and thankfully acknowledge, that all his Ability to do well is imparted by a higher Hand. If then the Gifts of Heaven are distributed to us more sparingly than we wish or expect, we lessen their Proportions, by not being duly qualified to receive them: And qualified we cannot be, while ingrateful to the Author, and negligent to improve all we receive to the Giver's Praise and Honour. For he who hath and useth Grace aright, does by that very Act incline God to give more. And from the Proud unthankful Neglecters of the Favour, even what they had is taken away, and added to the Portion of the Humble and Diligent; those who are duly sensible, from whom, and to what Purposes, they have it.

Might I be allowed to chuse my own Lot, I should think it much more eligible to want my Spiritual Comforts, than to abound in these at the Expence of my Humility. No, let a Penitent and Contrite Spirit always be my Portion, and may I ever so be the Favourite of Heaven, as never to forget that I am Chief of Sinners. Knowledge in the Sublime and Glorious Mysteries of the Christian Faith, and Ravishing Contemplations of God and a Future State are most desirable Advantages; but still I prefer *Charity which edifieth*, before the highest intellectual Perfections of that *Knowledge which puffeth up*. For every thing which is high, is not therefore holy. Many Meats are agreeable to the Palate, which are not conducive to Health; and those Gifts, which are first in our Esteem, do not always recommend us most to God. Those Spirtual Advantages are certainly best for us, which increase our Modesty,

1 *Cor.* viii. 1.

and awaken our Caution, and dispose us to suspect, and to deny ourselves. And therefore it is an Argument of Wisdom in God, to recal his Gifts sometimes; as well as of his Goodness, to impart them at others; that by the Loss of what we had, we may experimentally find our own Impotence; confess and feel our Wants; and know to whom the whole Glory of all that is excellent in us, does of Right belong. Deal justly then in this Matter; *Render to God the Things that are God's*, and take to thyself what is properly thy own: To Him, the Thanks for his Graces, nay, for the very Power of using them aright; To thyself, the Shame and Condemnation of having used them no better: And know, that His is the Honour for all thou hast done well, Thine only the Blame and just Punishment for all thou hast done amiss.

Sit down in the lowest Place, and then shalt thou with Honour be promoted to the highest; for the loftier the Building, the deeper must the Foundation be laid. The highest in God's Esteem are meanest in their own; and their Excellence consists in the Meekness and Truth, not in the Pomp and Ostentation of Piety, which affects to be seen and admir'd of Men. The reposing our Hope and Trust in God alone is the most effectual Prevention of Vanity and Insolence; and ascribing to him all our Virtues and Attainments, is inconsistent with coveting the Praise of Men. For such Persons are concerned to approve their Actions to God only; and labour to advance his Glory, as the chief and only Thing, which ought to be magnified in all that is pious and commendable, in themselves and every good Man. *Luke* xiv.

Receive then a little with due Sense of Gratitude, thus thou shalt obtain more. The Gifts, which others esteem meanest and most contemptible, consider as the Gifts of God, and let this raise their Value in thy Esteem. For indeed every thing ought to be esteemed, which

which is a Mark of his Favour, who is the ſupreme Lord of all. Even Stripes and Puniſhments from *his* Hands ſhould be, not only ſubmitted to with Patience, but received with humble Thanks; ſince his Rod is intended for our Good, and no Diſpenſation of his Providence is without its profitable and wiſe Deſign. If then thou value the Grace of God, and deſire to keep it, be thankful when he gives; be reſigned and patient when he takes away; pray fervently and frequently for the Returns of his Favour, and let not thy own Pride or Careleſſneſs provoke him to withdraw it.

Chap. XI.

Of Loving Chriſt in Affliction.

MANY we find poſſeſſed with ſtrong Deſires of Chriſt's Heavenly Kingdom, and eager of reigning with him there; but few, who are in love with his Croſs, and content to ſuffer with him upon Earth. The Graces and ſweet Conſolations of his Spirit charm and draw us, but Afflictions drive us away from him. When he invites Men to ſit down at his Table, the Gueſts come crowding in apace: but if he call us after him into the Wilderneſs, to Faſt and Pray with him, he calls in vain, and goes alone. The Breaking of Bread is what all of us like, but the Drinking of his Bitter Cup we are ſhamefully averſe to. We read the Hiſtory of his Life, and peruſe his Miracles with Reverence and Delight, for theſe were full of Mercy and Relief to wretched Men; but when he comes to the Tragical Circumſtances of his dolorous Paſſion, and bitter Death, we either ſhut our Books, or read the melancholy Story with Coldneſs and Indifference. Very

hardly perſuading ourſelves, that in *this part he hath left us an Example, that we ſhould follow his Steps.* Such was the Behaviour, not of the Multitudes only, but of his own Diſciples too heretofore, who throng'd into his Hoſanna's and his Preaching; but when he was apprehended, and treated as a Malefactor, all *forſook him and fled.* And ſuch is the Behaviour of all thoſe Chriſtians ſtill, who ſerve him Chearfully, while Things go well with them, and magnify his Mercy, ſo long as they taſte his Goodneſs; but draw back, when Afflictions approach, and if he hide the Brightneſs of his Face, fall into wretched Dejections and Deſpondency of Mind, and are provoked to Impatience and Murmuring, and ſad Complaints.

1 *Pet.* ii. 21.

Matth. xxi. *John* xviii.

Methinks we might find Charms and Engagements, many and powerful, which ſhould unite our Souls and Affections to the Bleſſed *Jeſus*, from what he is in Himſelf, not from what he is to Us; without any Reſpect of our own private Intereſt, and the preſent Advantages we receive from him. This would confirm and root us faſt in Love, and Praiſe and Gratitude; beyond the Power of outward Calamities, or inward Anxieties of Mind, to ſhake and divert us. Then ſhould we, with thoſe Holy Men, even think it good and thank God that we have been in Trouble, and though he *ſhould ſlay us*, yet ſhould we ſtill delight and *truſt in him.*

O! Could we once but get above this mercenary Diſpoſition of propoſing Intereſt and Gain in all we do, and love our Bleſſed Lord for his own Sake, how noble would be the Fruits of ſo generous a Principle? And indeed, how can we pretend to love him, when we only love ourſelves; and pay Obedience to his Commands, not out of Regard to *his* Authority and *our* Obligations, nor from a Deſire to pleaſe him, but purely to promote our own Advantage? For where, among the

the many Millions who profeſs to be Zealous Chriſtians, where is the Man that would be content to ſerve God, as his Maker and rightful Lord, he had no Expectation of Reward from him? Nay, who almoſt is ſo ſpiritual, ſo refined, as that Poverty of Spirit recommended and bleſſed by our Saviour, requires we ſhould be, that is, Reſigned as to all Temporal Enjoyments and well ſatisfied to perſevere in our Duty, and not to think our Maſter hard, tho' he ſhould even ſtrip us bare of all thoſe Comforts, which are uſually the Encouragements of Piety and Virtue? This is a Temper rarely to be met with; ſuch a Generoſity and Greatneſs of Spirit, as Crowns and Kingdoms, nay, the whole Eaſtern World, were wiſely given in Exchange for. For this is the Perfection of Love; a Virtue ſo exalted that no other Part of Religion is to be named with it. A Man may beſtow all his Wealth upon the Poor, and be never the better. He may chaſtiſe and mortify his Fleſh and Senſual Appetite, with all the Severities of the moſt exemplary Penitence, and yet this is but a low and little Excellence in Compariſon. He may attain to the higheſt and cleareſt Knowledge in the Myſteries of Religion, but ſtill he is infinitely ſhort. His Virtues may be bright and exemplary, his Devotion fervent and conſtant, his Meditations raviſhing and divine: All theſe are valuable Gifts; but there is ſtill one Excellence behind, more valuable, more neceſſary than all the reſt; and that is, being able, after having renounced all the World beſides, to renounce himſelf for the Sake of his Lord; to devote all he is or can do, ſo entirely to his Service, as to be content with every thing; to ſtudy his Will, his Pleaſure, his Glory in all Things, and to conſult his own in nothing: And when he hath faithfully and diligently performed all, which he knew it became, and was expected from him to do, to eſteem all this of no Conſideration, and account that he hath done nothing.

Others

Others, no doubt, will have quite different Notions of him. They will see and admire, publish and extol his Virtues, but still their Commendations, tho' never so profuse, never so just, will not have any Influence upon his Judgment; nor tempt him to swerve one whit from that Opinion, which Truth itself hath directed us to in this Case, *When ye have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable Servants.* He will not think that Complaint of the Prophet beneath him, *I am poor and desolate*; when yet in truth among mortal Men none is more wealthy, none more happy, none greater and more powerful than he, who in a true Christian Humility, thinks himself most helpless, most infirm, most miserable. In a Word, none more honourable in God's Eyes, than he who is vilest and most despicable in his own.

Luke xvii.

Psalm xxv.

Chap. XII.

The Reasonableness of taking up our Cross.

WHEN Jesus thus ascribes the Condition of our being owned for his, *If any Man will be my Disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me*; the Generality of Men are apt to cry out with those in the Gospel upon another Occasion, *This is a hard Saying, and who can bear it?* But, oh! that such would seriously consider, how infinitely more terrible and confounding that Sentence will be, which their angry Judge shall pronounce in Thunder at the last Day; and how those Ears, which are too soft and tender to bear This, will then be able to endure, a *Go ye Cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil*

Matth. xvi.

John vi.

Matth. xxv.

Devil and his Angels. Ah! how abſurd, how ſenſeleſs is it, not to harden ourſelves at preſent, and chearfully embrace a Command, which, tho' attended with ſome ſhort Uneaſineſs now, ſhould yet be welcome to us, becauſe it will give us Boldneſs in the great Day of Trial; and by impoſing ſome ſhort and very tolerable Pains, be our Security againſt Torments inſupportable and eternal? For when our Lord ſhall come to judge the World with terrible Pomp, the Croſs ſhall be diſplayed and lifted high in Heaven. This Thing now ſo much abhorred, ſo full of Shame, ſhall then be a Banner of Triumph; and they who have fought under it here, and followed the crucified Captain of their Salvation, in a Life of Humility and Sufferings, ſhall flock to it as their proper Standard, and enter with their glorious Leader into his Joy and Kingdom.

Why ſhould we then boggle at that Croſs, which leads directly to a Crown? Why thus obſtruct our Happineſs, by refuſing that which heals our ſpiritual Infirmities, guards us againſt our worſt Enemies, fills us with heavenly Comforts, brightens our Virtues, and ſupports us with aſſured Hopes of unconceivable and everlaſting Bliſs? Remember thy great Maſter and Example, bearing his Croſs, dying upon his Croſs, that thou hereafter mighteſt not diſdain to bear it for thine own Advantage, when he for thy Sake hath borne it before thee. *For if we die with him, we ſhall alſo live with him; if we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo reign with him; but if we deny him,* and are aſham'd of this Puniſhment, he will alſo *deny and be aſhamed of us,* and ſhut us out of his Glory. 2 *Tim.* ii. *Mark* viii.

Conſider that thy All depends upon Suffering and Dying. This is the Sum of thy Duty, this the Source of thy Happineſs. God hath ordained no other Way of bringing us to himſelf except that one of *dying daily*; and *crucifying the Fleſh with* *Gal.* v. 24.

its Affections and Lusts. In this all the Dispensations of Providence conspire; For what Course soever you take, which Way soever you turn, how prudently soever you contrive, the Cross is sure to meet you every where. And that which, willingly embraced, would prove your Safety and Virtue, is sure to be your Portion, whether you will or not. Bodily Sickness and Pain, Disappointments and Losses in your Fortunes, Anguish and Perplexity of Heart, Discomfort and Desertions from God, Injuries and Provocations from Men, and which is worse than all, Displeasure and Discontent at yourself; One or more of these will be perpetually exercising your Patience; and so long as God sees fit to continue you in this State of Mortality and Discipline, 'tis vain to hope you shall be exempted from them.

For God, in his great Wisdom and Goodness, appoints us to Tribulation; and damps, or withdraws our present Comforts, that we may learn to love and value Him and Heaven the more, to acknowledge our Dependence upon his Bounty, be made sensible of our own Impotence, and grow wiser and more humble by Afflictions. By these we are taught to understand and value the Sufferings of Christ, of which we should have but a very cold and imperfect Idea, did not our own Experience teach us what it is to suffer. And the greater Conformity to his Image our Trials work us up to, the clearer and more affecting Sense we have of his infinite Condescension. Avoid the Cross then we cannot, because we cannot run away from ourselves, nor cease to be Men; and therefore what we cannot avoid, we must make it our Endeavour patiently to endure, and render that which would otherwise be our Torment, an Instrument of Virtue here, and of Glory hereafter.

Now this is still in our own Power. For They who sustain their Cross, shall likewise be sustained by

it

it in return, and all their Pains largely rewarded in their proper Time and Place. But this Life is not that Time and Place; and therefore we must be content to labour now, and expect our Recompence hereafter. But if we bear with Murmuring and Grudging, what bear we must; we do but gall our Shoulders with the Yoke, and render that a heavy unprofitable Load, which might be fruitful and glorious. If we cast off one Burthen, we are immediately pursued and oppressed by another; and instead of Affliction, full of Hope and Humility, draw upon ourselves that most intolerable of all Burthens, Guilt and Despair.

Why should you entertain an Imagination so vain, as that of being made an Exception to all Mankind? Produce me, if you can, one single Instance in the whole Catalogue of glorified Saints, who passed this Vale of Tears without his Portion of Misery. Even Jesus Christ himself, our great Lord, tho' God as well as Man, yet lived a Life of Trouble, and none was ever so truly a *Man of Sorrows, or* so intimately *acquainted with Grief*. Himself hath told us, That *it behoved him thus to suffer, and to rise again the third Day, and so to enter into his Glory.* *Isaiah* liii. *Luke* xxiv.

And if this was the way necessary for Christ himself to ascend to the Throne of God by, we must not presume to hope for a smooth and easy Passage thither. His whole Life was little else but one continued Cross, a Chain of Sufferings drawn out to the Length of so many Years. And do We, who profess to tread in his Steps, expect a Life of Softness, and Ease, and Pleasure? No, no, fond Man, expect nothing but Trouble. This thou may'st depend upon, for it will never disappoint thee. It is not only the Condition of thy Happiness as a Christian, but thy certain Settlement and Portion as a Man. For Mortality is beset on every Side with Crosses, and exposed to suffering every Moment. And though these be both the Punishment and the Remedy for

for Sin, yet may we not imagine that they who are moſt careful to preſerve themſelves from Sinning, are in the ſame Proportion excuſed from Suffering. For frequently the beſt Men undergo the ſevereſt Trials; and the better they are, the tenderer and more painful Senſe they have of them. For the fervent Love and Deſire of a better Country, their proper and eternal Home, renders the preſent Pilgrimage and Baniſhment more tireſome and afflicting.

But yet theſe Calamities are no juſt Reflection upon the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of Almighty God; for as he appoints the Rod in his Mercy, ſo does he likewiſe furniſh his Servants with mighty Conſolations and Supports, ſuitable to their Circumſtances. And they, who ſubmit to the Croſs as becomes them, reap large and glorious Fruits by ſowing in Tears. The Burthen of their Miſeries is lightened, by caſting their Care, and repoſing their Truſt, upon one who hath a tender Care for them. And the more the outward Man is weakened and oppreſſed, the greater Strength and Grace they feel in the inner Man. Nay, ſuch is their Deſire, ſuch the Satisfaction of being conformed to the Image of Chriſt; that good Men oftentimes would not ſo much as wiſh to be freed from thoſe Miſeries, in which the leſs diſcerning Part of the World are apt to think the very Extremity of Unhappineſs to conſiſt. For theſe better inſtructed Souls have a farther Proſpect, and can ſoften all their Diſtreſſes by this Conſideration; that the more they endure, the purer and more refined they are from Sin, and the more acceptable and dear they become to God. It is true, this Conſideration is not the Effect of any Strength or Wiſdom merely human, but the Product of divine Grace. This ſometimes gains ſo abſolute a Conqueſt over natural Inclinations, and exalts Fleſh and Senſe to ſo high a Degree of Reſignation and Perfection, that what, as Men we cannot but decline, and have vio-

lent Averſions to, as Chriſtians we contentedly embrace, and are entirely ſatisfied with.

When therefore we feel in our Selves, or obſerve in Others, a Zeal ſo powerful, ſo noble, as not only to bear, but even to love and delight in the Croſs: When we vanquiſh and bring into abſolute Subjection theſe Bodies, and their Appetites, by a long painful Courſe of rigorous and voluntary Severities; When we induſtriouſly avoid Honours and Wealth, bear Injuries and Infamy contentedly, deſpiſe ourſelves, and even delight to be deſpiſed by others; When we entertain the ſharpeſt Misfortunes with Conſtancy and Temper, and are ſo perfectly dead to the World, as no longer ſo much as to deſire thoſe Enjoyments and Advantages, which recommend and ſweeten Life to Mankind; do not ſuppoſe that this is the Work, or falls within the Compaſs of Man: For they who depend upon their natural Powers, or their own moſt exquiſite Philoſophy, can never riſe ſo high, nor thus abſtract their Minds from Matter and Senſe. No Principle, but that of holy Truſt and Faith in God, is capable of ſuch divine Operations. This Strength and Reſolution comes from Heaven. No Force leſs than Almighty can beat down the Fleſh, the World, and the Devil under our Feet; None defeat and ſet us above the Horrors and Aſſaults of his Malice and Temptations; leſs than His, who vanquiſhed this old Serpent upon the Croſs, and by ſo doing, ſanctified our Croſs to Us too.

Call up then all thy Powers of Reaſon and Religion: Remember whom thou haſt engaged to follow, and with all the reſolute Fidelity due to thy Vows and Obedience, ſet thyſelf manfully to take up his Croſs, who ſubmitted to die upon a Croſs for thy Salvation. Prepare and diſpoſe thy Heart, that no Affliction may overbear thee by Surprize; but, conſidering what infinite Variety of Troubles hem thee in, and wait thee every

every where, let none have the Advantage of finding thee unprovided: Were there a Poſſibility of eſcaping, we might then be allowed to contrive Methods of declining our Miſeries: but ſince they cannot be ſhifted off, the only Remedy we have left againſt them, is readineſs to ſuffer. Conſider it is thy Lord's Cup, and that he drank the very bittereſt Dregs of it; conſider it is he who gives it; and that he therefore gives it, that thou may'ſt be Partaker of his Sufferings, in order to be made a more worthy Partaker of his Glories.

Luke xxii. 'Tis true, he was ſtrengthen'd in his Agonies by an Angel, ſent from Above, nor ſhalt thou want Supports proper for thy Condition. But what theſe are, or in what Meaſures fit to be imparted, our Lord himſelf knows beſt; and to his wiſe Diſpoſal we muſt leave it. But all we have to do our ſelves, is to ſecure an humble and patient Diſpoſition. And this we ſhould find leſs Difficulty in, would we but follow the Pattern our Jeſus hath left, of *enduring the Croſs, and deſpiſing the Shame, for the Glory ſet before him.*

Heb. xii. And what can recommend our Suffering, what confirm our Patience more, than to conſider, that *theſe light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, ſhall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory?*

1 *Cor.* iv. That Glory, in compariſon of which they are not worthy ſo much as to be nam'd. A Glory ſo exceeding, that if all the Tribulations incident to all Mankind were heaped upon one ſingle Perſon; yet even ſo the Recompence is infinitely above what ſuch a Suffering could pretend to deſerve; and Heaven would be cheap and wiſely bought, even at this vaſt Expence.

Eſteem thyſelf then happy indeed, when thou canſt even enjoy thy Sorrows, and find a ſenſible Satisfaction in ſuffering for Chriſt; for this is in a manner to attain Heaven upon Earth. A Happineſs, which no Man can ever arrive at, ſo long as Adverſities bring Pain

Pain, and Discontent, and sad Oppressions of Spirit; for the Solicitude, and constant Labour to avoid Calamities, will be sure to produce perpetual Disquiet.

Suffering and Dying are not only necessary Incumbrances upon us, but the best and most authentick Instances of our Virtue and Obedience. It is the Business and Perfection of a Christian to do thus daily; and they, who in good earnest apply themselves to it, will quickly find their Affections raised, their Strength increased, their Comfort and inward Peace wonderfully advanced. St. *Paul* was wrapt up into the third Heaven, yet did not he boast so much of this, as of his Afflictions. And wherein the uncommon Privileges of this especial Favourite consisted, we learn from the Mouth of Christ himself, when he says, *I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my Name's Sake.* Suppose then you could be admitted to his Extasies and Revelations, yet even these, it is plain from his Example, would not exempt you from Trouble and Sufferings; for the more you are loved, and the more vehemently you love, and are desirous to please your Saviour; the greater Proofs of this kind you must expect to give. 2 *Cor.* xii. *Acts* ix.

Consider those *Apostles*, who went away from their Persecutors, *rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ.* And learn from thence to covet and value the Honour and Dignity of enduring Pain and Poverty, Persecution and Reproach. For this would seem no mean Preferment, but a Favour reserv'd for those whom God is kindest to; did we but reflect upon the Gain it brings to ourselves, the Glory to our Maker, the Joy to Saints and Angels, and the Benefit to our Brethren, who shall observe, and be encouraged by our Stedfastness, and Patience, and holy Perseverance. Nay, even the Wicked and Carnal will be *Acts* v.

moved by such Examples. For there is so manifest a Congruity and Decency, in submitting to any Adversities which it shall please God to lay upon us, that even they who have not the Heart to imitate, yet will not be able to forbear commending and admiring, the Pattern we set them.

Would we indeed weigh Things in a just Balance, it is most unreasonable we should decline suffering for *Christ*, when it is so very visible, that we are well content to undergo much sorer Hardships for the World, than any he thinks fit to call us to. And shall Humour, or Passion, or temporal Interest, be suffered to prevail upon us more powerfully than Duty? Especially when that Duty promotes an infinitely better Interest; and the more we are mortified to ourselves and the World, the nobler Advances we make towards God and Life Eternal? These are refined Privileges, for which no Man is qualified, till he be first purified in the Furnace of Adversity; nor can the spiritual and divine Graces dwell in a Soul, till the Dross of Earth and sensual Appetites be first wrought off. Assure yourself, that suffering for, and in Obedience to Christ, is not only the most acceptable Thing to God, but really advantageous for yourself, and that which contributes most to the Soul's Health of any thing that can happen in the present State. And, would the Prejudices Flesh and Blood lie under, permit us to discern and consider Matters impartially, this would be first in our Wishes; and preferred before all the outward Prosperity, or inward Satisfactions this World can give. For who would not be ambitious of resembling our Lord, and his most eminent Saints? Who is so blind, as not to see, that the Thing, in which they signalised their Merit, was not the larger Degree of their Revelations, or the Pleasures they enjoy'd, but the Number and Extremity of their Afflictions? And we may be very confident, that if Christ had known any better Way

to Heaven, than by Croſſes and Patience, he would both have choſen it himſelf, and reſerved it for his faithfulleſt Servants, and deareſt Friends. But ſince his own Example, and his conſtant Directions declare, That *if any Man will come to him, he muſt deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs, and follow him*, it is but Folly and loſt Labour to think of any other Method. For when all is done, this will be the Sum and Concluſion of the whole Matter, That *thro' much Tribulation we muſt enter into the Kingdom of God.*

Luke xiv.

Acts xiv.

The End of the ſecond BOOK.

OF THE IMITATION OF Jesus Christ.

The Third Book.

Digested into Conferences between CHRIST and the Soul of his Disciple.

CHAP. I.

The Happiness of such a Conversation.

Disciple.] I *Will hear what the Lord God will say concerning me,* *Psal.* liiiv. 8. For blessed is the Soul which hears the Lord speaking, and feels the transporting Comforts of his gracious Words. Blessed are the Ears, which with a greedy Attention, drink in the soft and gentle Whispers of his Spirit, while they continue obstinately deaf to the treacherous Insinuations of this deluding World. And doubly blessed are they who hear the Sound of Truth, not only in the outward Administrations of the World, but by the inward and familiar Communications and Motions

of infused Grace. Blessed those Eyes, which are shut to all the Objects of the World, and constantly wakeful and open to the Affairs of the Soul, and turned inward upon one's self. Blessed are they whose sharper Sight enters deep, and pierces into the secret and sublime Mysteries of heavenly Truth; purged and prepared by spiritual Meditations, and daily Exercise of holy Duties. Blessed indeed are they, who disengage themselves from all worldly Incumbrances, and gain Leisure and Opportunities for attending continually upon God alone.

Consider this my Soul, and shake off sensual Desires, which must be first abandoned, before thou canst listen with due Reverence and Attention to those Things which the Lord God will speak. And O! what comfortable Words are those, *I am thy Peace, thy Life, thy Salvation, and exceeding great Reward. Come unto me thou that art weary and heavy laden, and thou shalt find Rest unto thy Soul. Set thy Affections on Things above, and not on Things on the Earth. For the Things that are seen are temporal, but the Things that are not seen are eternal.* What are all things here below, but dangerous and empty Delusions? And what could it profit a Man to gain, tho' it were all the Creatures, if he be forsaken and cast off by the Creator? In him alone is Pleasure and Bliss, and Glory. Therefore let go those cheating Shadows, and embrace the only substantial Good; bid a final Adieu to the Deceits of the World, and place all thy Love and Endeavours upon thy God; for in his Service and Acceptance thou shalt attain the End of thy Wishes, the Fruit of thy Labours, solid Satisfaction and true Happiness.

John xiv. *Gen.* xvii. *Matth.* xi. *Colos.* iii. 2 *Cor.* iv.

CHAP.

Chap. II.

God is in the small still Voice.

Disciple.] *Speak, Lord, for thy Servant heareth. Behold, I am thy Servant, and the Son of thy Handmaid; O give me Understanding, that I may learn thy Commandments.* Incline my Soul to the Words of thy Mouth, which *drop down as the Rain upon the tender Herb, and distil gently, like Dew upon the Grass.* The *Israelites* indeed besought *Moses* heretofore, *Speak thou unto us, and we will hear, but let not God speak unto us, lest we die.* But let it no be so done unto me, my God. I rather chuse to make my humble Petition in the Prophet *Samuel*'s Form; *Speak, Lord, for thy Servant heareth.* Let not *Moses*, nor any of the Prophets, be my only Instructor, but do thou thyself also vouchsafe to teach me by thyself. For thou art the Source of all their Light and Knowledge. They could not utter Truth without thy Inspiration and heavenly Guidance; but thou art essential Wisdom and Truth, and canst communicate thyself effectually to my Soul.

1 *Sam.* iii. *Psalm* cxix. *Deut.* xxxii. *Exod.* xx. 19.

Their Words, alas, are Air and empty Sound, but thine alone are Spirit and Life. Their Expressions may be proper, their Arguments moving, but unless thou break Silence, my Soul will still continue deaf and insensible. They deliver the Words, but thou art the Interpreter, and lettest me into the true and hidden Sense of their abstruse Oracles. Their Books are sealed, and only thy Hand can open and explain them. From them we receive the Command, but only from Thee the Disposition to obey, and the whole Power of performing it. They shew the Way, but thou impartest the Strength to walk in it; all they

can do, is ſtill remote and without us. Thou only enterest into the Soul, and by a ſecret Conveyance puttest Truth in the inward Parts. *Paul may plant, and Apollos water*, but except thou be pleaſed *to give the Increaſe, the Word will return unto thee void, and accompliſh* no part of *the End whereto thou ſenteſt it.* The Voice of their Cry pierces our Ears; but the knowing what they cry, and the Impreſſion upon our Hearts, is thy peculiar Gift.

1 *Cor.* iii.

Iſa. iv.

Therefore I cannot but implore again thy Grace and Mercy, and beg that *Moſes* may not ſpeak to me, but thou, my Lord, my God, the only and eternal Truth, leſt I die; not by the Terrors of thy thundring Voice, but by the effectual Communications of thy Will. For if I be inſtructed and admoniſhed by the outward Miniſtration only, and be not inwardly diſpoſed, and zealouſly affected to Obedience, the Advantages of Inſtruction will but aggravate my Condemnation. For this is the diſmal Conſequence of the Word *preached not profiting, when it is not mixed with Faith in them that hear it.* And mixed with Faith thou knoweſt it cannot be, except ſeconded and enforced by the Voice of thy Spirit; except thou incline me to love the Good I know, and enable me faithfully to fulfil the Doctrine I believe. *Speak therefore, Lord*, I ſay again; to thee thy Servant liſtens gladly, for *thou haſt the Words of eternal Life.* Speak powerfully to my Soul, and carry the ſaving Truths home to my Conſcience and Affections; that thy Words may bring Comfort and Peace, Reformation and Holineſs to thy attentive Servant, and to thyſelf immortal Honour and Praiſe.

Heb. iv.

John iv.

Chap. III.

Of the General Disregard to God's Word, and the Obedience due to it.

Christ.] Since then, my Son, thou so passionately desirest to hear my Voice, incline thou thine Ears to my Words. Words, which well deserve, and will abundantly reward thy most diligent Attention; For they are sweet and charming, far above all the engaging Arts of Human Eloquence; useful and instructive, beyond the most laboured Systems of Philosophy. The Wisdom of this World could not invent, or order, nor can it comprehend them. The Mysterious Truths they declare are too strong for Human Sense to behold; nor canst thou enter into their Secrets, till guided by that Light from whence they flow. My Precepts are pure and spiritual, such as a Carnal and Impure Heart can find no Relish in. My every Word is of Weight; and spoken, not to entertain the Curious, and tickle Itching Ears, but to subdue the Heart, and command a strict Obedience. Hear therefore, but hear as becomes thee, with respectful Silence, and entire Submission; with profound and awful Humility: with an earnest Desire to be taught; and sincere and vigorous Resolutions of doing as thou art taught.

Disciple.] I own the mighty Favour, and heartily acknowledge, with thy Holy Prophet, That *Blessed is the Man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him in thy Law; That thou mayest give him Strength in time of Adversity, lest he fall away with the Ungodly.* *Psalm* xciv.

Christ.] That Prophet spoke what I inspired, and so did all those Holy Men of old; for they were all of my sending. Nor is my Care at all abated now, tho' the

the Effects of it may be less visible. For I, who taught them then, continue teaching still: Nay, I direct my Speech to All, but All will not hear it. For there are many deaf to all my Charms; and therefore deaf, because they stop their Ears; *hate my Instructions, and will none of my Reproofs.* They listen to the World much rather than to God, and are more disposed to obey their own Corrupt and Sensual, than his Pure and Heavenly Will. The World invites them with short and transitory, trifling and empty Joys, and they greedily engage in its Service; I covenant for Eternal and Excellent Rewards; and the insensible Wretches will not consider, or think them worth their Acceptance. This Folly is universal; For who among the Sons of Men, expresses half that Zeal and Earnestness, that solicitous Desire to please, and dutiful Fear to offend, in his Deportment towards me, which he does in Matters relating to this World, or in Obedience to Masters upon Earth? Consider this, and blush for Shame; for What but Shame and Confusion of Face can be the Effect of thy Reflection upon this unworthy Usage, this most absurd Folly?

Prov. i.

A small Preferment is esteemed a valuable Consideration for long and painful Journies. Men fly for it eagerly, and hasten all they can to get ground of their Competitors: This is every one's Care, and it is accounted a Reproach to be negligent in such Pursuits. But, when Advancement to Heaven and Eternal Happiness is offered, they are slothful and unactive, and scarce a Man is to be found, who thinks it worth the while to mend his Pace, or sets one Step forward to meet, or to secure so glorious an Advantage. A little sordid Gain engages all Mens Industry; a trifling Sum embroils them in tedious and expensive Suits; And Promises of Things scarce worth their having, they are content to drudge for; to lose the Ease of their Days, and the Sleep of their Nights, and think their Toil

Toil and Anxious Care well paid, if they can compass them at last: But a substantial and unchangeable Good, a Recompence greater than they know how to value justly, Immortal Glory, and the Honours of the Saints, are sunk so low in wretched Mens Esteem, that the least Pains and Hardship are thought too much for them.

And art thou not ashamed, lazy, insensible, grumbling Wretch, that the Children of this World should pursue Death and Ruin, with a more vigorous Industry and Zeal, than thou canst find in thy Heart to bestow upon Life and Happiness? Shall Toys and Vanities win more upon their Affections, than solid and true Good can upon thine? Nay, even those Vanities, whose very Enjoyments are empty, do often mock their Hopes, and are never enjoyed at all: Their Friends promise and deceive; They labour but cannot attain: But my Promises are without Repentance: None taxeth me with Breach of Faith, or can complain that his Dependance upon my Word hath at any Time disappointed him. For I require only Love and Perseverance: And, if these be not wanting, I answer to the full; nay, I far exceed, my Servants largest Wishes and longing Expectations. Yet false and fickle Men can easily persuade, and the God, who cannot lye, calls and promises in vain! I am the surer Rewarder of all that diligently seek me; and if such meet with Sufferings and sharp Temptations, these are not Marks of my Displeasure, but wisely ordered, and kindly intended, to prove the Sincerity of my Servants Zeal, and to illustrate their Virtues.

Write then my Words in thy Heart; Grave them in deep and lasting Characters; Ponder them diligently, for thou shalt find them a seasonable Relief and necessary Support in the Day of Trial and Adversity. What Reading only hath not taught thee, Affliction will interpret and make plain. For I do not always

always visit my Chosen alike. Sometimes the Comforts of my Grace are proper; at others, the withdrawing those Comforts, and bringing their Patience and Constancy to the Touch, by Outward Calamities, and Inward Anguish of Spirit. Thus I daily train them up in Goodness, by chastising and making them hate their Sins, and cultivating and encouraging their Advancement in Virtue. The One Dispensation engages their Love of me, the Other abates their Fondness for the World. But lost and wretched is that stupid Creature, upon whom these Methods make no Impression; For *He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not my Words, hath One that judgeth him in the last Day.* *John* xii. 46.

Chap. IV.

A Prayer for Heavenly Instruction and Devotion.

Disciple.] O Lord, my God, Thou art my All, my only Good! but Who, alas! am I, that I should take upon me to speak to so Great, so Glorious a Majesty? Poor sinful Dust and Ashes; a wretched Worm; less than the least of all thy Servants; much less, much viler, and more despicable, than I dare to think, or am able to express or conceive. And this very Vileness, Lord, I beg thou wouldst consider, that so my helpless desolate Condition may move thy tender Pity to a miserable Creature, who neither is, nor hath, nor can do any Thing, without thee. For Thou only art Good, and Holy, and Powerful; and that of Power so boundless, of Mercy so diffusive, that thou fillest all Things with thy Goodness; and none but those guilty Souls, who refuse to partake of thy Grace, are shut out from its kindly In-

Influences. Behold me then hungring and thirsting after thy Righteousness, and let not me be sent empty away. Call up thy Bowels, and remember thy Compassions and old Loving-kindnesses; and fill my Soul with thy Grace and Heavenly Dispositions, that it may be a Dwelling fit to entertain that blessed Inhabitant, who will not take up his Abode in defiled and desolate Places.

But how can I furnish a House for my Lord, except he vouchsafe to assist and supply my Wants? How can I sustain the Miseries and Temptations of a Troublesome Dangerous World, except thou graciously interpose and support my Weakness? Turn not then thy Face away from me; neither delay thy Fatherly Care; for if thou grant not refreshing Dews, and water not my Heart with thy Grace, it will remain a dry and barren Ground. Teach me, dear God, to know and do thy Will; and with sincere Humility, and indefatigable Zeal, enable me to persevere in my Obedience. For Thou art my Wisdom, and my Righteousness; my Infirmities are not hid from Thee; Thou knowest me perfectly, and understoodest all my Defects, not only before I was born, but even long before the World itself was made.

Chap. V.

Walk humbly with thy God, and worship Him in Truth.

Christ.] I Do, indeed, my Son, know thy Frailties, and thy Dangers, but let not these discourage thy Endeavours. Seek and love the Truth, and let thy Heart be right with me, and all shall be well at last. For Truth and Sincerity will be thy Protec-

tion, and defend thee from the Assaults of the Devil, and the Attempts of wicked and deceitful Men. Those who are *thus set free, shall be free indeed*; nor shall the Seducements or the Discouragements of Enemies to the Truth, be able to ensnare or divert them from their Duty.

John viii.

Disciple.] True, Lord. And this Persuasion makes me more earnestly implore thy Assistance. That thou, who art Truth itself, wouldst in much Mercy condescend to instruct, and direct me; to preserve and protect me; to break the Snares of the ungodly in pieces; to deliver my Soul, and establish me unto the End; to purge me from all corrupt and inordinate Affections, that my own happy Experience may convince me of what I already believe, and render thy Service perfect Freedom.

Christ.] My Children cannot be more zealously disposed to ask these Blessings, than I am ready and pleased to grant them. Hear therefore the Truth, and how thou mayest recommend thyself to my Favour and Acceptance. Reflect with sad Remorse upon thy past Offences; let the Remembrance of these render thee vile in thy own Eyes; and take heed, that no Confidence in thy best Actions, swell thee with vain Conceits of thy own Deserts. For, sure it is, thou art a Sinner, laden with Guilt and many grievous Infirmities; prone in thy own Nature to Vanity, easily seduced, quickly diverted from good Resolutions, and overcome by very slight Temptations. In short; no Excellence belongs to thee, which can in any degree justify thy Pride or Boasting; but infinite Occasions there are to exercise thy Humility and Lamentation, infinitely more in Truth, than thou canst be duly sensible of.

Let not then the mistaken Value of any thing thou art, or doest, delude thee with false Appearances of Worth and Perfection: Let not thy Affections be seduced

duced to follow vain and wretched Objects, or think any Advantage can deserve thy Praise or Admiration, thy Love and Pains; except such only as are fixed and Eternal. Let Truth be thy chief Delight, for This is unchangeable; let thy own Unworthiness be the chief Object of thy Hatred and Contempt, for this is the vilest, the justest Thing, upon which thy Displeasure can discharge itself. Fear and decline no Calamity, comparably to Sin. For no Loss, nor worldly Disappointment or Disaster can have so fatal Consequences, as the Loss of a Good Conscience and God's Favour, by transgressing his Righteous Commands.

Some Men are more concerned for Subtilty of Knowledge in Religion, than for an humble and sincere Obedience. They are acted by a Spirit of Pride and Curiosity, and affect to penetrate the Mysteries of Faith; and value themselves much more for being able learnedly to dispute for Truth, than for adorning it by their Lives, and rendering that Knowledge effectual to Salvation. These Men frequently fall into dangerous Snares. I set my Face against their Arrogance, and suffer them to perish thro' the Vanity of their own Imaginations.

But do thou employ thy Mind upon other Sorts of Enquiries, and account it greater Wisdom to get a perfect Knowledge of thy own Works, than those of Almighty God. *His Ways are unsearchable, and past finding out*; but thy own are necessary to be nicely examined. And the Consideration of the Evil thou hast done, and the Good thou hast left undone, will turn to better Account, than thy Scholastick Speculations, concerning the Divine Nature and Counsels. Some place their Religion in Images some in Good Books, some in an outward Shew and Pomp of Devotion, measuring their Piety by the Prayers they say, the Sermons they hear, the Meals they abstain from: Others honour me with their Lips, and

Rom. xi.

and talk familiarly of me, whose Hearts I am as utter a Stranger to, as their allowing me no Place in their Thoughts and Affections can make me. But some again, without such formal Pretences, are Men of true Spiritual Wisdom, and inward Purity; their Desires and Conversation are in Heaven, and earthly Entertainments are no longer welcome to them; they even grudge those Hours, which the necessary Cares for supporting these Bodies cut off from the greater Concerns of their Souls. And these are the Men, that lend a willing Ear, and bring a Temper truly teachable to the Instructions of my Spirit: In them he reigns and triumphs. For, having vanquished the Corrupt Inclinations of Flesh, and inspired them with a true Christian Bravery of Soul, they despise the treacherous Vanities of this World, and lay out all their Love and Labour upon the Joys of that better World, which, till God thinks fit to admit them into it, they strive to anticipate, by keeping their Minds Night and Day intent upon it.

Chap. VI.

The Power of the Love of GOD.

Disciple.] I Laud and magnify thy glorious Name, O Father of Heaven, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for all the Goodness and Tender Compassions, with which thou hast been pleased to remember and relieve my Misery. For unto thy Loving-kindness alone, O Father of Mercies, and God of all Comfort, are owing all the Supports, with which the Soul of thy unworthy Servant hath been at any Time refreshed in the Midst of my Trouble. And therefore to Thee alone be the Praise. To Thee, O Father, with thy

the only Begotten Son, and the Bleſſed Spirit the Comforter, will I render Honour and Thankſgiving for evermore. Deſcend then, Bleſſed God, into that Soul, for which thou haſt expreſſed ſo great a Tenderneſs, and let thy Preſence fill me with Gladneſs: For thou art my Health, my Joy and my Glory, my Hope and my Refuge in the Day of Diſtreſs.

I muſt confeſs with Sorrow that my Love is weak, and my Virtue imperfect; nor can the one be ſupported without thy Grace: or the other be cheriſhed unleſs thou fan thy Holy Fire, and feed it with thy Heavenly Comforts. O viſit me then with thy Salvation, and make me to improve under thy Holy Diſcipline. Deliver and purify my Heart from all corrupt Affections, and irregular Paſſions; heal my Spiritual Diſeaſes, and take away that Droſs and Filth, which obſtruct my purer Delights of Divine Love, diſcompoſe my Patience, and ſhake my Intentions of Perſeverance.

For Love is great and powerful, an excellent Virtue and mighty Advantage in Well-doing. It lightens the heavieſt Burthens, makes Difficulties eaſy, and ſmooths the Rugged Ways of Duty; takes out the Bitterneſs of Sufferings, and gives them a delightful Reliſh. This is the Principle, which fires us with a vigorous and active Zeal, inſpires brave and noble Attempts, and ſpurs us on with an impatient Deſire of ſtill higher Degrees of Perfection. For Love ever labours to be uppermoſt, and diſdains to take up with low and vulgar Attainments. It hates Confinement, and would fain get looſe from all Worldly Affections; that ſo its inward and ſpiritual Proſpects may not be intercepted, by any Temporal Good or Evil, which darken and block it up. In Love is the Perfection of Pleaſure and Strength; it is higher than Heaven; broader than the Sea; it fills the ſpacious Univerſe, for it is born of God; The firſt and beſt of all his

Creatures: And as it came from Him, ſo it never reſts till it have got above all Finite Beings, and center again in that Only, that Infinite Good, from whence it originally ſprung.

The Perſon acted by it flies with eager Haſte, does every thing with Chearfulneſs and Pleaſure, and ſuffers no Impediments to ſtop him in his Courſe: He gives all Things liberally, and yet poſſeſſes All, becauſe his Soul is united to that Supreme Good, in and from whom is all Perfection. He looks not ſo much at the Gift as the Giver; and be the Quality of that what it will, it only ſerves to render him more grateful to its Author. Love knows no Bounds, no Meaſure; but thinks it can never do enough; and attempts Things even above its Strength, not conſidering ſo much what it is able as what it is deſirous and diſpoſed to effect; The Vehemence of Deſire takes off all Senſe of Difficulty, and thinks nothing ſo great but that it may and ought to aim at it. And hence proceed thoſe mighty and aſtoniſhing Atchievements, which Love does daily bring to paſs, where the Fire continues ſtrong, and is not damped by Sloth and Faint-heartedneſs.

Love is entirely awake, never tired with Labour, nor oppreſſed with Affliction, nor diſcouraged by Fear; But like a clear and ſtrong Flame, is ever mounting upwards, and makes its way thro' all Oppoſition. It cries continually in the Ears, (for fervent Love is that Cry which pierces the Ears) of the moſt Higheſt; and all the Language of Devout Souls inflamed with it, is to this Effect: *My* God, *My* Love, *thou art my All*; *and I am entirely thine.* Enlarge my Heart, and make me capable of yet more Love; that I may feel and feaſt upon the Sweetneſs of the delightful Affections, and even melt away and loſe myſelf in the Extaſies, and Charms of this heavenly Diſpoſition. Increaſe and blow up this divine Flame, that, not content

to excel others, I may daily excel myself. Teach me the Song of Love, and receive me up on high, to Him in whom my Soul delighteth; and fill me with such Raptures of Joy and Praise, that even Sense and Life may be swallowed up in Bliss. Let me love thee much more than myself; nay, love myself and all good Men, to whom thou art dear, only in and for Thee; For so hast thou commanded in that Law of Love, which is but as it were a Beam and Efflux of thy own Glorious and Divine Excellence.

The Love of God is nimble in its Motions, sincere in its Intentions, ardent and zealous in Devotion, sweet to the Soul, brave in Attempting, patient in Enduring, faithful in Executing, prudent in Action, slow in Resentment, generous and manly, and seeks not to please the Person's self, but the Person beloved. For, where a Man seeks his own Advantage only, there Interest, not Love, is the Principle upon which he moves. Love is cautious and circumspect, upright and humble; not soft and effeminate, not fickle and fanciful; not fond of Vanities; but sober and grave, chaste and refined, constant and sedate, severe and reserved. This disposes us to Submission and Respect towards our Superiors; to a mean and modest Opinion of ourselves; to Gratitude and Devotion towards God; it inspires Hope and holy Trust, even in Times of Calamity and Discomfort. And necessary it is that it should do so, since no Man is so happy as to love without Pain, or always to live under the Light of God's Countenance, so as that no Clouds should ever intercept the cheering Warmth of his Favour, and create some dark Intervals.

That Man therefore does not deserve the Character of One that loves God, who is not disposed and content to suffer any Afflictions, which the Divine Providence sees fit to inflict; or thinks much to do whatever his Will declares fit to be performed. In a word,

The hardeſt and moſt unpalatable Proofs of our Virtue, beſt declare the Fervency and Sincerity of it; And if Diſaſters or Calamitous Accidents cool or draw off our Affections, this is an Argument, that a Man is not yet what the *Apoſtle* requires we ſhould all be, *Rooted and grounded in Love.*

Epheſ iii. 17.

Chap. VII.

The Trial of true Love.

Chriſt.] I Have obſerved, my Son, thy Notions of Divine Love; but Thou, alas! art not yet arrived to that reſolute Bravery and Prudence there deſcribed.

Diſciple.] Lord, make me ſenſible wherein I fail, and teach me how to mend it.

Chriſt.] A ſmall Temptation ſhocks thy Obedience. Thou boggleſt at Difficulties, and falleſt from thy own Stedfaſtneſs, if I ſeem to withdraw my Favour. The Comforts and Aſſiſtance of Graces are to be wiſh'd with Zeal, but not with Impatience: Nor mayeſt thou ſo ſet thy Heart upon them, as preſently to recoil, if ſuch Supplies do not at all times anſwer thy Expectation. I hide my Face to try thy Courage. For true Chriſtian Magnanimity is moſt eminently ſeen in Troubles and Diſtreſſes; in turning the Deaf Ear to all thoſe crafty Inſinuations of the Enemy, which take the Advantage of Melancholy and deep Perplexity of Heart, to ruin and ſeduce unſtable Souls, by tempting them to deſpair. This Virtue rejoices in Proſperity, but does it with ſuch Temper, as not to be offended, and fall away by reaſon of Adverſity.

He that loves prudently, keeps his Eyes upon the Giver, conſiders the Kindneſs and Diſpoſition of his Friend,

Friend, and values the Gift by that, not by its own Quality and intrinsick Worth. He finds more real Satisfaction in my Affection, than in the most profuse and desirable Benefits which flow from it. Not that I would condemn all Doubts and sad Misgivings, for those are incident to the best Men; and the Infirmities of Nature do not admit such perfect Evenness of Mind, as is always affected alike with the Love and Delights of Holiness, Those sensible Pleasures that good Men sometimes feel themselves transported with, are the Effect of Bounty and Favour, and great Indulgence; not necessary and inseparable Consequences of Virtue. The sweet Foretastes of Heavenly Joys are such as you cannot depend upon, till brought to the Fruition of that Land of Promise. And therefore no just Conclusions can be drawn from thence to the Prejudice of those who want them; because in this Life they are given at Discretion, and frequently make Way for a severer and more seasonable Discipline. And when that Discipline takes Place, then to persist in doing well, to strive manfully against all the Reluctances of frail Flesh and Blood, and hold out in Despite of all the Importunities and discouraging Suggestions of the Tempter; this is a Proof of true Spiritual Bravery, and entitles such valiant Combatants to a noble Reward, and exceeding bright Crown.

Let Reason therefore, and a well-grounded Faith, not Fancy and Imagination, govern thy Behaviour; And, after what Manner soever thy Soul is affected, let thy Purposes of Obedience be still the same, and thy Perseverance unbroken. Sometimes perhaps thou art all Rapture and Joy, and these Extasies are not what the prophane World suppose, mere Dreams and Delusions: Sometimes again thou wilt relapse into Weakness and Wanderings; these are not thy Choice, but thy Misfortune; Nor dost thou create them to

thyself, but suffer them with much Regret. Now what is not the Man's own Act, shall never be imputed to him as a Fault; and what is thus by God's Permission, or the Frailty of Nature, if rightly managed, will tend to thy Advantage, and rather improve than endanger thy Virtue.

This indeed you must know, and constantly remember: That the inveterate Enemy of Souls is ever labouring by all means to cool your Zeal. He watches and greedily takes hold of all Occasions to slacken your Devotion, to prevail with you to neglect, or abate of, your Prayers and other Holy Exercises; to, divert your Thoughts of Christ and his Sufferings, and fix them upon Objects of a different Kind; to beat you off from that strict Guard, which ought always to be kept upon your Soul; and to undermine your good Intentions, and repeated Resolutions. He conveys many loose and wicked Thoughts into your Heart, uses a thousand Sleights and Artifices, to represent Religion a tiresom, tedious and unnecessary Thing, and to draw off your Attendance upon God in Prayers, in hearing his Word, in reading the Holy Scriptures. And, happy he thinks himself, if by Degrees he can draw you to a Disuse of these Things: For nothing more prevokes his Malice, and crosses his Designs, than to see Men frequently upon their Knees, zealous in discovering and confessing their Sins; devout and attentive Comers, to Church; and constant Receivers of the Lord's Supper. When therefore he would persuade you to be cold and remiss in any Matter of this Nature, be sure to give no Credit to his false and wheedling Insinuations, for they are so many Snares laid to captivate and to destroy you, Turn smartly back upon him, with a *Get thee behind me, Satan*; "Blush, if thou canst, unclean Spirit, at "thy own treacherous Villany; I am well aware of "thy deadly Baits; and sensible that Hell and Death

"are

" are upon the Hook; Thy fly Deceits are loſt upon
" Me, for I am reſolved already, and my Jeſus, who
" vanquiſhed thee upon the Croſs, will aſſiſt my Weak-
" neſs, and enable me to overcome thy Temptations.
" Think not to terrify me with Difficulties; for Death
" and Sufferings are light Calamities, in Compariſon
" of Guilt and Sin; and theſe I infinitely rather chuſe
" than once to comply with thy wicked Motions.
" Be gone then, and for ever hold thy Peace; for I
" will ſtop my Ears, and am from this Minute in-
" flexibly deaf to thy moſt troubleſome Solicitations.
" Thou thinkeſt to run down a poor weak Mortal, but
" even that Mortal is a Match *for thee through Chriſt*
" *that ſtrengthens him.* And ſtrengthen me he will; for
" *the Lord is my Light and Salvation, whom then ſhall I*
" *fear? The Lord is the Strength of my*
" *Life, of whom then ſhall I be afraid?* *Pſal.* xxvii.
" *Tho' an Hoſt were banded together againſt me, yet will*
" *I not be diſmay'd; for the Lord is my Helper, and my*
" *God is the Rock of my Confidence.*"

Fight therefore the good Fight, and follow the Captain of thy Salvation, like a ſtout Soldier. And, if at any time thou loſe Ground through Human Infirmities, rally thy Forces again quickly, and enter upon a ſecond Engagement with redoubled Vigour; not doubting ſeaſonable Recruits from Me. But if at any Time thou prove victorious, let not this Succeſs exalt thee beyond Meaſure. For Pride and Arrogance are of fatal Conſequences, they often end in dangerous Errors, and are juſtly puniſhed with almoſt incurable Blindneſs. Let the frequent Examples of Vain Men, undone by their own Folly and my juſt Indignation, be ſet before thy Eyes, as ſo many Sea-marks, to warn thee from ſteering the ſame dangerous Courſe: And the greater Conqueſts thou obtaineſt over the Devil and thy own Frailty, the more humble and cautious let theſe Advantages make thee in thy Conduct; and the more juſt to

God, in ascribing the whole Success and Glory to the powerful Assistance of his Grace.

Chap. VIII.

Grace must be received without Ostentation.

Christ.] My Son, when thou feelest thy Soul warmed with Devotion and holy Zeal for my Service, it will be advisable to decline all those Methods of publishing it to World, which Vain Men are so industrious to take, and content thyself with its being known to God and thy own Conscience. Rather endeavour to moderate and suppress those pompous Expressions of it, in which some place the very Perfection of Zeal. Think meanly of thy own Virtues. Boast not of that Grace, whereby thou art capable of differing from another. But let the Remembrance of thy own Unworthiness make thee fear the Loss of Gifts, which thou didst not deserve ever to have. This is not only an undeserved, it is also a very short and uncertain Privilege; for the brightest and warmest Zeal is apt to languish and wax cold; and unless Men could assure themselves of such a Degree of Grace, as would alter and fix these variable Natures of theirs, the Fervours of Religious and Holy Desires can never be constant and equal.

While therefore thou enjoyest these pleasing pious Comforts, humble thy Soul with Reflections upon thy Impotence and Misery, thy Coldness and Deadness, when thou hast them not. And consider withal, that the Improvement and Commendation of a Christian's Virtue consists, not only in the thankful Use of Grace, but in a modest, humble, and resigned Temper, which can

can bear its being taken away without Murmuring or Deſpondency; ſtill exciting and encouraging itſelf, ſtill continuing the ſame Diligence in holy Duties, and never ſuffering Sloth, or Deſpair, or Diſcontent, to abate one whit of a Man's beſt Endeavours, to do the utmoſt his Condition is capable of.

This is an Excellence which very few come up to; Idleneſs and Impatience are the uſual Effects of ſpiritual Diſappointments. Which yet is moſt unreaſonable, if we think at all, in whoſe Diſpoſal theſe, as well as all other Succeſſes are. For Men cannot command Events; God is ſole Maſter of his own Favours. He gives to whom he pleaſes; nor will he be limited, otherwiſe than by his own Wiſdom, what or how much, or in what Time and Manner he ſhall give. And even when he is moſt liberal, Men may convert his beſt Gifts into Occaſions of their own Deſtruction. Thus ſome Men of bold ungoverned Zeal aſpire at Things beyond their Strength, and expreſs more Vehemence than Conduct in their Actions. They are perfectly carried out of themſelves with Eagerneſs; forget they are ſtill poor Inſects upon Earth, and think of nothing leſs than building their Neſt in Heaven. Now theſe are often left to themſelves, and taught by ſad Experience, that the faint Flutterings of Man are weak and ineffectual, and that none ſoars to Heaven, except I aſſiſt his Flight, and mount him upon my own Wings.

It is therefore highly expedient, that Perſons of more Zeal than Experience, ſhould not proceed upon their own falſe Meaſure of themſelves, but refer their Proceedings to the Guidance, and better Judgment of ſome Perſons, whom long Time, and much Obſervation, hath taught to temper thoſe vain Conceits they are apt to entertain of their own Strength, and to proportion their Undertakings to their Circumſtances. But this is a Submiſſion which Humility muſt qualify them

them for. For he who is wise in his own Eyes, seldom endures to be directed by another. And this Consideration makes a very moderate Degree of Knowledge, attended with a modest and governable Mind, much more safe and eligible, than the highest Attainments with Pride and Self-conceit. The mighty Transports and great Satisfaction Men frequently feel from their own Improvement in Goodness, are of dangerous Consequence, if they be suffered to destroy the Remembrance of a Man's former Weakness and his Fears of relapsing into Sin again. And on the other hand, these Fears may run into Excess, if Difficulties tempt Men to despair, and beget melancholy Distrusts of God's Ability and Readiness to relieve and rescue them by the Succours of that Grace, which knows how to scatter and defeat the strongest Temptations.

The same Disposition of Soul, which leads to Security in Times of Prosperity and Peace, inclines to Fearfulness and Dejection of Mind in the Day of Adversity and Conflict. For would a Man but guard himself against vain Confidences, and proceed always with Caution and Prudence, when his Graces and his Hopes are at the highest; this would preserve him from those Dangers, which unwary Heat and too sanguine Hopes are apt to involve him in. And therefore, when you form to yourself the fairest and most promising Expectations, it will be seasonable to consider, what may become of you, if God should hide his Face, and abate or wholly withdraw those chearing Comforts, which now so much exalt you. And so again, when these are interrupted, support your Spirits in those dark Intervals, with the Hope that Day may break upon you again, and that this Night of Affliction is prolonged, to make you more advised, and get the greater Honour.

For

For such Trials as these are more for the Advantage of my faithful Servants, than a constant Succession of Prosperity and Consolation could possibly be. They must needs be so; since Virtue does not consist in abundance of Illumination and Knowledge; but in Lowliness of Mind, in Meekness and Charity, in a Mind entirely resigned to God, and sincerely disposed to serve and please him; in a just Sense of a Man's own Vileness, and not only thinking very meanly of One's self, but being well content to be so thought of by Others.

Chap. IX.

Of acknowledging our Unworthiness before God.

Disciple.] *Behold, now I take upon me to speak unto my Lord, who am but Dust and Ashes,* vile and sinful Dust and Ashes! For should I entertain any better Opinion of myself, I make my God my Enemy, and stand convicted by the undeniable Testimony, and just Reproaches of my own guilty Conscience. But if I humble my Soul, cast off all vain Imaginations of Merit, and think myself that wretched Thing I really am; thy Grace exalts me, thy Light chears and supports me, and all that groundless Arrogance, to which my corrupt Heart is naturally disposed, vanishes into nothing. O! give me then a right Understanding of myself; help me truly to discern what I am now, what I was originally, and whence I came. That I am nothing, and proceeded out of nothing, and if destitute of thy Grace, have nothing left, but what I had much better be without, even Sin and Infirmity. And yet as vile, as sinful, as dejected, as I am of myself, as soon as thy Gen. xviii.

bright Beams of Favour are caſt upon me, my Weakneſs is made ſtrong, and my Heavineſs turned into Joy. I cannot obſerve the ſudden wondrous Change without Aſtoniſhment, and am not able to account for the happy Exaltation of my Nature; which, tho' by its own Weight inclined to ſink perpetually, and by a fatal Tendency to Sin and Hell, preſs'd down with a Load of Fleſh and Frailty, is yet, by the mighty Operations of Grace, enabled to aſpire to ſpiritual and refined Objects, and take noble Flights to Thee and Heaven.

Thus, I am duly ſenſible, is the ſtrange Effect of thy free Grace alone, preventing my Deſires, inſpiring noble Thoughts, aſſiſting my Weakneſſes, ſupplying my Wants, relieving me from Dangers innumerable; which, without theſe powerful Succours, muſt unavoidably deſtroy and ſwallow me up. For an inordinate Love of myſelf was formerly my Ruin, but a ſincere Love of Thee, and an entire Dependence upon thy Goodneſs, recovers and reſtores me; and the more I love and truſt in Thee, the leſs Reaſon I find to value and have any Confidence in any thing of my own. For Thou, O deareſt Redeemer, are bountiful and kind, far beyond my Deſerts: My Deſerts! Alas, they are none at all, or worſe than none: But Thou exceedeſt even my largeſt Deſires and giveſt more, infinitely more, than I either dare preſume to aſk, or am able to expreſs.

Eternal Thanks and Praiſe be therefore rendered to my God, for that unſpeakable Goodneſs, which does not diſdain to beſtow the precious Gifts of his Grace and Spirit, upon a Wretch unworthy the leaſt of all his Mercies. Yea, bleſſed and adored be his Liberality and Long-ſuffering, which, in Deſpight of all our Provocations, continues to engage thoſe by Kindneſs, who, by their former Ingratitude and Abuſe of it, had juſtly forfeited all future Favours; and by many

many excellent Arts and holy Importunities, invites and draws Men to himself and their own Happiness, who have an Aversion to both. Even so, sweet Jesus extend thy Compassion, and continue thy Care of us, who are too prone to neglect thee, and ruin ourselves. Oh! bring us to thyself, by thankful, humble, pious, Dispositions; for we ourselves are nothing, and Thou art Holiness and Health, our only Strength and Salvation.

Chap. X.

Of doing all to the Glory of GOD.

Christ.] THE sure and only Way to Happiness is, to make Me, my Son, the chief and ultimate End of all thy Actions and Desires. By this thy Sincerity will best be proved: by this thy Mind is refined and purified from all those sordid Interests and partial Respects, which are apt to debauch human Nature, too much of itself addicted to private Gain and Selfishness, and those false Prospects of Happiness which the Love of this World vainly proposes. For as soon as any Man descends to these, and seeks *himself* in all he does, he finds his own Inability to compass his Intentions, and grows barren and unprofitable. Keep Me then constantly in view, and aim at nothing but the Advancement of my Honour; which is indeed but reasonable and just, since I am the first and perfect Good, the Source from whence all Things flow, and therefore all of Right return to, and should center at last in Me again. I ask but of my Own, the Tribute and Acknowledgment of the Successes given by my Providence, of the Actions performed by Virtue of my Concurrence, of the very Faculties

ties and Powers originally inſpired by my creating Spirit.

The High and Honourable, as well as mean and Low, the Rich and Poor, all drink of this common Fountain, and the moſt powerful of the Sons of Men can do nothing, till furniſhed with Ability from hence. This Spring is inexhauſtible, and they who receive moſt, and are grateful in their Returns, I water with more liberal Meaſures of Grace. Them that honour me, I never fail to honour and bleſs in a viſible and eminent manner; but if Men glory in any thing but the Lord, I blaſt their Devices, diſappoint their Hopes, make them aſhamed of their vain Boaſtings. For ſo have I ordered Matters by my Providence, that no true laſting Satisfaction ſhall ever fill that Heart which ſets its Affections upon private and paltry Advantages. Croſſes from without, and Perplexities from within, are the certain Conſequence of worldly Deſires, and ſelfiſh Principles.

If therefore thou haſt received, or done any good thing, take care of miſplacing the Honour and Thanks due for it, upon thyſelf, or any other Perſon. For this is robbing God of his Due, from whom Men receive whatever they have, or are, and ſtand in Duty and Equity bound, to pay him their Acknowledgments. Since therefore the whole is my Gift, when I demand the whole Thanks and Praiſe, I demand but the Product of my own; and this is what, as I injure no Man in requiring, ſo I reſolve never to depart from.

This is the true Principle of Juſtice. Neceſſary to be conſidered, and thoroughly ſubmitted to; becauſe it checks and utterly confounds that other moſt pernicious Principle of Pride and Vain-glory, to which Mankind are ſo exceeding prone. Nor is it leſs conducive to their Happineſs, than to their Duty. For, where this generous Love and Regard of Me takes place,

place, it does not only engage my Favour, but secures the Man from Envy and Discontent, Partiality, and every other Passion, that uses to torment little and worldly-minded People. For this respectful Deference and fervent Love of God enlarges the Soul, and fills it with great and truly noble Thoughts. And therefore this is a certain Mark of true and heavenly Wisdom, to make Me its only Joy and Hope: For how can he be wise, who does not see that God is the Perfection and Original of all Good, and that the necessary Consequence of his being so, is, that he is to be praised, honoured, admired, in, and for, and above all; since all the Good which Men pretend to esteem, is by Communication from him; an Emanation from his Fulness, an Effect of that sole, that universal Cause?

Chap. XI.

God's Service is perfect Freedom.

Disciple.] I Will again take the Confidence to speak unto the Lord: Nor ought I indeed to hold my Peace, but address myself to thee, my Lord and God, my heavenly King, that sitteth on thy Throne far above the Skies, and thus will I proclaim thy Mercies and my own Happiness. How pure, O Lord, how sweet, how exquisite are the Pleasures thou reservest for them that fear thee, that delight themselves in thy Love, that are entirely devoted to thy Service. No Tongue can worthily express the wondrous Joys, the Transports, and ravishing Extasies, which fill these pious Souls, inflamed with the Love, and employed in the Contemplation of Thee. For this is a Subject boundless as thy Goodness; that Good-

Goodneſs, which exerted itſelf in commanding me out of Nothing. And when that Being which thou gaveſt was rendered liable to eternal Miſery, a freſh, and yet more valuable Inſtance of thy Mercy, was that of beſtowing upon me a new and better Life, when I was worſe than Nothing. For thou hadſt Compaſſion on my Weakneſs and my Wandrings. Thou ſoughteſt, and with tender Care broughteſt back thy loſt Sheep, taughteſt me the right Way, helpedſt me to walk in it, and didſt inſtruct and guide me in thy Love.

O thou overflowing Spring of endleſs Love, how ſhall I worthily magnify thee, how can I forget thee; Thee, who in my loweſt Ebb of Miſery, didſt condeſcend ſo graciouſly, ſo effectually, to remember me! Whoſe Kindneſs reſcued me from Death, and far exceeded all my Hopes; reſtored me to that Favour, which my Sins had forfeited, and ſhewed itſelf a Friend to that Wretch who was become thine, and his own Enemy. *What ſhall I render to the Lord for all the Benefits he hath done unto me?* *Pſal.* cxvi.

If I reſolve to ſerve thee, yet how poor a Tribute is that, to Him whom all created Nature is bound to ſerve? This is ſo far from a ſufficient Return, that I ought rather to admire thy Mercy, and eſteem it an Honour to myſelf when thou vouchſafeſt to accept the Service of ſo poor, ſo worthleſs a Creature, and doſt not diſdain to reckon me amongſt thoſe, whom thou ſuffereſt to do thee Homage.

For even in this I pay thee but thy own, ſince I and all I have are thine. But why do I ſpeak of ſerving thee, when by a moſt aſtoniſhing Condeſcenſion, even thou, the mighty God, art pleaſed to ſerve me. For this is the Effect of that excellently good Providence, which hath contrived and ordered Heaven and Earth, and all the Creatures in ſuch a manner, that they ſhould be uſeful and beneficial to Mankind; which hath appointed bleſſed Spirits above for Guards and Mi-

Miniſters to the Heirs of Salvation; and, which is moſt ſurpriſing, when Thou thyſelf, for my Sake, hadſt taken upon thee the Form of a Servant, and wert made a frail, and afflicted Man! When Thou didſt give thy Life for undone Sinners, and ſtill doſt give thyſelf in Grace, and haſt engaged to give thyſelf, even the full and eternal Fruition of thy glorious Godhead, to every ſincere Believer.

O! that it were in my Power to make a ſuitable Return, for Love which paſſes, not my Thanks only, but even my Knowledge! O! that my Ways were made ſo direct, that my whole Life might be one continued Act of Gratitude and Obedience! Nay, ſuch is my Infirmity, that I muſt be content to wiſh, that any one Day of that Life might be employed as it ought in thy Service. I know, O Lord, that thou art worthy to receive all Duty, and Honour, and Praiſe for ever. I am ſenſible that thou art my rightful Lord, and I thy poor Servant; that the utmoſt I can do is thy juſt Due, and that I ought to take unſpeakable Delight in thanking and obeying thee; that nothing elſe but this ſhould give me any Satisfaction, and that when I have laid myſelf out entirely upon it, I ſtill have done too little. This is the real Perſuaſion, this is the earneſt Deſire of my Soul; and where my Power fall ſhort of my Inclination, there do thou, I beſeech thee, ſtrengthen and ſupply what is wanting, by thy Grace, that my Deeds and Deportment may bear Teſtimony and Proportion to my pious Diſpoſition.

To be the meaneſt of thy Servants is the higheſt Advancement; to deſpiſe and forſake all for thee, is true Riches and Honour. They who thus enter themſelves into thy Family, and chearfully undertake this Taſk, ſhall have a glorious Reward; they will feel the Pleaſures of this World infinitely paid, infinitely outdone, by the better and larger Amends of Grace and

divine Comforts in Exchange. They who thus bind themſelves to thee, that abandon worldly Cares, and attend to the One Thing neceſſary attain to true and generous Freedom of Soul. For the ſtrait Way of thy Commandments is the only perfect Law of Liberty. O happy Confinement! what ſets Men at large from the Slavery of Sin, from worldly Cares, and Incumbrances, from the inſupportable Tyranny of unruly Appetites and domineering Paſſions! O bleſſed Dependance! which makes us of the moſt high God's Retinue, raiſes us up to a Level with the Angels, renders us dear to the Almighty, a Terror to evil Spirits, Conquerors over our greateſt and fierceſt Enemy, and recommends us to the Love, the Praiſe, the Imitation, of all good Men. Who would not greedily embrace ſuch a Service, where the very Work is pleaſant, the Encouragements paid down in hand noble and great, and the Wages promiſed in Recompence for our Labours, Happineſs exquiſite, unſpeakable, and everlaſting?

Chap. XII.

Of regulating our Deſires.

Chriſt.] YET ſtill, my Son, there are many Things in which thou art not ſufficiently inſtructed.

Diſciple.] Lord, be thou pleaſed to let me know, and enable me to receive, and do them.

Chriſt.] Thy Deſires muſt be reduced into Subjection, and my Will take place in every thing; Nor muſt thy own private Intereſt, but the Zeal and Regard for my Honour, and the Obedience due to my Commands, be the governing Principle of all thy Actions.

Actions. You feel Desires, like inward Springs, put you into Motion; and very eager sometimes you are of doing what you are verily persuaded is good. But even when the Thing itself is commendable, the Intention and Motive Men go upon, ought to be nicely considered. For it makes a mighty Difference, whether I or themselves be principally in their Thoughts. Now this Discovery is not hard to make. For if my Honour be their great Concern; howsoever my Providence disposes their Affairs, they will conclude what I do best, and will be contented with it. But if under this Disguise of Holiness, there be a lurking Corruption of private and By-respects, if Gain makes Men frugal, or Ambition virtuous, or the Praise of the World charitable, or the Consideration of their own Health temperate; these are Principles upon which no Dependance can safely be had. Their Conduct will be unequal, and vary as Events do; and every Disappointment of their Expectations will produce Trouble and Impatience.

Do not therefore be too confident of every Sort of Inclination to do well; but first advise with Me, and take care to build upon a good Foundation. For Men who act upon indirect Ends, very often repent when it is too late; and that which at first they proposed great Satisfaction and Advantage from, proves at long run their Torment and Loss. Nay, I must give you this farther Caution yet, That even good Inclinations are not to be taken at first Sight, nor rashly pursued without a diligent and prudent Observation. For it may be convenient sometimes, to put some Restraints upon the very best Intentions. They who neglect this and give free Scope to their Zeal by too great Eagerness, often exceed the Bounds of Moderation and Decency; sometimes gives Offence to their Brethren by their extravagant Heats, and impetuous Sallies; and sometimes, upon any Resistance or Difficulty, which

obſtructs thoſe precipitate Fervours, loſe all their inward Peace, deſiſt from their good Deſigns, and fall from the Heighth of Rapture, to the Extremities of Melancholy and Deſpair. So that, to make thy Zeal in Well-doing in all Points what it ought to be, it is by no Means ſufficient, that it be honeſt and well-diſpoſed, unleſs it be alſo ſober, and regular, and diſcreet.

Again, There are ſome Occaſions and Circumſtances, which render a Sort of holy Violence neceſſary, and oblige Men to act quite contrary to their Inclination to bear no manner of Regard to Fleſh and Senſe; or what will be more agreeable any farther than may ſerve to ſet the Mind in Array againſt them, and reſolutely engage in a formal War, for the reducing, or keeping them in Obedience to the ſuperior Faculties of the Soul. For, by thus frequently controuling and counter working all that human Nature hath a Tendency to, the outward Man is by degrees qualified for Duty; and acquires a great Readineſs of doing, or ſuffering, whatever ſhall be impoſed upon it. And in theſe Exerciſes the firſt Foundations are laid, of Contentedneſs with a Little, of Satisfaction in a private and neglected State, a mean and narrow Fortune; and of Patience under any Croſſes or Calamities, without thoſe murmuring Thoughts, which are apt to beget hard and irreverent Reflections, and too often break out in wicked Complaints, and ſaucy Expoſtulations againſt the Juſtice, and Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of God and Providence.

Chap. XIII.

The Neceſſity and Reaſonableneſs of Patience.

Diſciple.] BY all the Collections I am able to make from my dear Lord's Inſtructions, and the little Experience I have of the World, Patience ſeems to me a moſt neceſſary Virtue; for the Condition of Man in this Life is ſo expoſed to Calamities and Sorrows, that in deſpite of all his Endeavours after Peace, Troubles await him every where, and his State is that of Warfare and continual Suffering.

Chriſt.] It is ſo, my Son; Nor is it fit it ſhould be otherwiſe. For thoſe Men have a wrong Notion of Peace, who make it conſiſt in Freedom from Suffering; in either having no Troubles, or being inſenſible of any. This is a State, neither attainable by a Man, nor convenient for a Chriſtian. The Peace I would have thee aſpire after, is ſuch as conſiſts very well with Afflictions. And this is gained, when a Man hath brought himſelf to that equal Compoſure, and reſigned Temper of Soul, as firmly to perſiſt in his Duty, and to reſt ſatisfied in the Diſpenſations of God, when he thinks fit to try his Virtue by very great and grievous Adverſities. If this appear a hard Saying, think how much harder it will be to endure the Torments of Hell and the implacable Vengeance of an angry God. Nature, as well as Religion, teaches Men, of two Evils to chuſe the leſs. And this is done, when they ſet themſelves ſubmiſſively to undergo Tribulation here, for the ſake of God and a good Conſcience; that they may, by ſuch patient Suffering, deliver themſelves from the dire Effects of his Wrath, and never-ceaſing Puniſhment hereafter.

Now Tribulation is a Portion distributed in common to all the Sons of Men; distributed in large Measures, even to those Children of this Generation, which thou perhaps vainly imagineſt to be moſt exempted from it. For even the gayeſt and moſt proſperous of them all are not without their many and ſore Evils. It is true, indeed, they take a great deal of Pleaſure, indulge their Inclinations without Controul, and ſo their Miſery makes a leſs ſenſible Impreſſion upon their Spirits; but Miſeries they have. Or, put the very beſt of their Caſe, and ſuppoſe their Joys to be without any Interruption, their Wiſhes without any Diſappointment; yet, even thus, how long would their Happineſs laſt? Alas, they vaniſh like a Dream, and all their Proſperity ſoon ſcatters like Smoak: Nay, not only their Enjoyments themſelves. but the very Remembrance of them periſh in a Moment. Their Life is but a Vapour; and Death will be ſure to ſwallow up them and their Gaieties in ſpeedy and perpetual Oblivion.

But this is putting the Caſe more favourably than it ever happens in Reality; for even in this Life their Plenty and Pleaſures are chequer'd with Misfortunes, and all their Sweets allay'd with a bitter Mixture of Cares and Fears, and inward Perplexities of Heart. The very Objects that miniſter Pleaſure, bring Pain along with them too. And this is one great Argument, how wiſe a Providence the World is governed by, that the very Inordinacy of thoſe Affections, which purſue the Pleaſures of Senſe ſo eagerly, ſhould prove a Torment to the guilty Mind, and embaſe thoſe very Pleaſures they indulge. Theſe very Pleaſures too are ſhort and fleeting, treacherous and deceitful, irregular and exorbitant, a Shame and Blemiſh to human Nature; and if Men be not ſenſible of this, that Ignorance proceeds from their own Inadvertency. Their Reaſon is intoxicated with preſent De-

Delights, and their Minds blinded by vicious Habits, by which they degenerate into Brutes, ſtupidly abandon themſelves to the tranſitory Pleaſures of Sin and Luſt, at the Expence of everlaſting Pains; and conſult the preſent Gratification of a vile mortal Body, with the Ruin of a precious and immortal Soul.

Go not thou therefore after their Exceſſes, nor place thy Happineſs in ſerving, but rather in commanding, ſubduing, denying, mortifying thy own Inclinations. *Delight thou in the Lord, and he ſhall grant thee thy Heart's Deſire.* *Pſal.* xxxvii. For this Delight will teach thee, that the Happineſs of Man conſiſts in inward and ſpiritual Satisfactions, in the Contempt of this World and its empty Gaieties. And the leſs theſe are eſteemed and affected, the greater and more raviſhingly ſweet ſhall thoſe generous and noble Pleaſures prove, which reſult from the Experience of God's Favour, and the ſubſtantial Comforts of a good Conſcience.

But ſtill theſe Comforts are not to be had, without much Labour, many Conflicts, and ſharp Sufferings. For the corrupt Inclinations of Fleſh and Blood, and the confirm'd Habits of Vice, create great Difficulties, and aſk Time and Pains to conquer. And conquer'd they may be, by introducing the contrary Habits of Virtue. The Fleſh indeed will recoil, and think itſelf ill uſed; but Reaſon and Religion will ſilence thoſe Grumblings, and reſolute Perſeverance in good Works vanquiſh all thy Reluctances. The ſubtle old Serpent will ſeduce and importune thee, but Prayer and good Thoughts drive the evil Spirit away; and Faſting and holy Exerciſe, or conſtant lawful Buſineſs, will keep him out. For he never enters ſo eaſily, ſo ſucceſsfully, as when Idleneſs ſets open the Door, and an empty Heart makes room for his wicked Suggeſtions.

Chap. XIV.

Obedience to Superiors; enforced by Christ's Example.

Christ.] KNOW, my Son, that the Man who refuses Obedience, rejects the Grace; and excludes himself from the Favour of God; and by seeking his own private Advantage inordinately, breaks the Order, and obstructs the Good of the Publick. Disrespect and Contumacy to Superiors, is an infallible Mark of rebellious Appetites, and of Passions not reduced to the Governance of Reason and Religion. Submission therefore is of good Use for subduing the Flesh and its Lusts; and a good Preservative against Temptations. For the foreign Enemy will be more successfully opposed, when thy domestick one is first vanquished, and all quiet within. And Man himself is his own worst Enemy. Nor are his Circumstances ever more full of Danger, than when the sensitive raises Insurrections, and would dethrone the rational Soul. And in order to this bringing the inferior Faculties to Reason, an humble Opinion of yourself is necessary; for Partiality and Pride are at the Bottom of all the Disorders in thy own Breast, and all the Disturbance given by unruly Men to Society, and good Government of all Kinds.

And what such mighty Merit is there in this Submission? What Disparagement can it be thought to thee, who art Dust and Vileness, when thou remembereſt, that I myself, the Almighty Majesty of Heaven, and the Lord of all the Universe; I who created thee, and the whole World, out of Nothing, did yet condescend to a State of Subjection, and appeared in the very lowest, most servile, and despicable Form, for thy Sake, who art Nothing? And why, but that so

thy

thy Pride might have no Pretence to support it, after so eminent a Pattern of Humility? Learn then, thou Wretch, to humble thyself; and, like that Earth of which thou art, be even content to be trampled upon, and trodden under Foot: Lay thyself, like the Streets, to the Feet of insulting Men who walk over thee, and never rest till thou hast broken thy own Perverseness, and art in a constant Readiness to comply with every just Command of all who have Authority over thee.

Till this be done, pursue thy Passions with remorseless Indignation, and spare them not, till they very last Remains of Pride be absolutely suppressed and killed in thy Heart. And if thou sometimes find ill Usage and Tyrannical Barbarity, yet still consider, thou art but a Man, and ought'st not to complain; nay, rather consider, thou art a Sinner, in justice consigned over to Hell and Eternal Fire; and let the Anger of an offended God, with strictly is thy Portion and Desert, check thy Resentments of the Insolence and Injuries the Reproachful Treatment, and unjustifiable Hardships, which Men may sometimes offer to thee. This Wrath of God thou hast provoked, but I in my Mercy spared thee. I had Compassion on thy Soul, and ransomed it from Death by my own Blood. And canst thou think, that no Return is due for such Mercy? Yes; know, that I require thou shouldst be sensible of the astonishing Greatness of my Love, and shew that Sense by Gratitude and Humility; by a modest and respectful Observance of my Representatives here below; and by not disdaining to suffer any Shame and Contempt, any Injustice and Barbarity, when Providence and Duty call thee to it, which I, thy Master, thy God, did not grudge to undergo for thy Sake, whilst conversing in human Flesh upon Earth.

Chap. XV.

God's Judgments are to be consider'd, for our Humiliation.

Disciple.] WHEN thou, Lord, uttereſt thy Voice in Judgments, my Joints are looſed, my Limbs quake for Fear, my very Soul is confounded, and trembles at thy Thunder. In the midſt of theſe Horrors I begin to reflect, that the *Heavens themſelves are not pure in thy ſight*, and that even the *Angels* thou *haſt charged with Folly*. If then thoſe exalted Intellectual Spirits were not able to ſtand before thee, and kept not their firſt Eſtate, What muſt become of ſuch a Wretch as I am? If even the Stars fell from the Firmament, how can Duſt and Aſhes hope to eſcape? They, who did eat Angels Food, degenerated from their Primitive Excellence, and fed on Huſks with Swine; how then ſhould a Creature preſerve its Innocence, whoſe very Original is impure?

Job xxv.

This, Lord, convinces me, that there is no Holineſs but what is derived from thee alone; no Wiſdom without thy Governance; no Strength a ſufficient Defence, if thou withdraw thy Gracious Protection; no Continence or Abſtemiouſneſs effectual, except thou guard it; no Watchfulneſs againſt the Enemy, unleſs thy wakeful Eyes keep all our Approaches, and repulſe the Aſſaults of the Tempter. If thou ceaſe to ſupport us with thy mighty Hand, the Waves ſwallow us up; we ſink and periſh without thee, and with thee walk upon the Sea in Safety: Weak and unſtable are our Reſolutions, but thy Grace gives Strength and Perſeverance. Cold and timorous are our Hearts, but thou warmeſt them with Zeal, and inſpireſt them with Courage. *Lift up then, Lord, our Hands that hang down,*

down, and our feeble Knees, that we faint not in this Spiritual Warfare; and enable those who can do nothing without thee, to conquer all Difficulties through thy Strength.

I know, O Lord, that if any good thing seem to be in me, yet even this deserves my meanest Opinion, and will in no degree justify my thinking otherwise of myself, than as a most vile and worthless Wretch. And therefore, when thy angry Justice afflicts me, it is my Duty, with the profoundest Humility, to lay my Mouth in the Dust, and meekly submit to thy correcting Hand. For, though I cannot discover all the Reasons of thy Mysterious Judgments; yet this I find no Difficulty to discern, that I myself am nothing, and that I proceeded out of nothing. O the dark Abyss! in which I can find nothing relating to myself, but Vanity and Nothing. Where then is the Presumption, where the Pride, the lofty Conceit of my Worth and Virtue? Whither are all my vain Confidences, and towring Imaginations fled? Thy Judgments, Lord, have swept them away like a Torrent; and all are sunk in those unsearchable Depths. These shew me to myself, and justify the Prophet's Rebuke, *Shall the Clay exalt itself against the Potter that fashioned it? Behold, as the Clay is in the Hands of the Potter, so is every Mortal Man in thy Hand, O Lord.* *Isa.* xiv. *Jer.* xviii.

And is it possible for that Soul to swell with Insolence and vain Conceit, which is duly sensible of thy Majesty, and submits to it, with that Lowliness and resigned Submission which thy Truth directs? No, no, Not all the Voices of Mankind, conspiring unanimously in his Praise, can blow him up to fond Conceits of his own Excellence, when once his Hopes and Heart are fixed on God. For he considers, that all these are but so many Copies of himself; frail and feeble, deceivable and perishing, Emptiness and Nothing.

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That they, as well as their Words, are only Air and Sound, and both will quickly vanish together; but God and his Truth remain for evermore. *Cease therefore from Man*, for *wherein is he to be accounted of?* and endeavour to have Praise of Him, *who resisteth the Proud*, but in his own due time *exalteth them, who humble themselves under his mighty Hand.*

Isa. xi.

1 *Pet.* iv.

Chap. XVI.

With what Reserves we ought to Pray.

Christ.] LET this, my Son, be the Language and Style of all thy Prayers: *Lord, if it be thy Pleasure, grant me this Request; If what I ask conduce to thy Glory, do thou be pleased to give and prosper it: Lord, if Thou, to whom all Things and their Consequences are perfectly known, seest that this will be for my true Advantage, not only bestow it, but, with it, Grace to use it to thy Glory: But if thou seest it may prove hurtful to me, do not only deny my Petitions, which proceed from Ignorance and Mistake; but remove far from me the very Desire of that, which cannot be obtained without my Prejudice.*

This last is a very reasonable and expedient Request; because many Desires, which seem, not innocent only, but even virtuous and wise, profitable and praise-worthy, in a Man's own Eyes, are yet neither inspired by God, nor agreeable to his Will: Nor is it easy to discern, whether one be acted by a good or evil Spirit; or whether, in the Matter of his Prayers, his own Inclination and private Respects do not determine him. And many a one, who hath fancied the Impulse of Divine Grace, and persuaded himself, that he hath been directed and acted by it, all

along, finds the Deluſion out at laſt: And what he imputed to the Spirit of God, proves in the End a Suggeſtion of the Devil, or the eager Longing of his own vain Mind.

The ſureſt Way then never to offend God in thy Deſires, and to be accepted in thy Addreſſes to him, will be to temper all thy Inclinations with his Fear, and not ſo much as indulge a ſecret Wiſh, without ſuch Reſervations, as may teſtify an entire Submiſſion to the Divine Diſpoſal. And when thoſe Wiſhes break out into Words, Men ſhall do well to conceive and preſent them in ſuch Forms, as may expreſs ſome Check upon themſelves, and mighty Caution in reſtraining their Tongues from aſking any Thing in a Peremptory Manner; but leaving the Matter entirely to God's better Choice. As thus: "*Lord, thou knoweſt whether the having, or the* "*being denied the Matter of my Petition, be moſt conve-* "*nient; and therefore all I beg is, that what thou ſeeſt* "*moſt expedient, may be done*; I aſk, *indeed*, as is my "Duty, but I preſume not to preſcribe to thy hea- "venly Wiſdom. Give therefore, Lord, ſuch Things, "and in ſuch Meaſures, and at ſuch Times, as thou "ſeeſt fit. Deal with me as thou knoweſt is neceſſa- "ry: for that I am well aſſured is beſt for me, which "is moſt agreeable to thy Will, and moſt conducive "to thy Glory. Appoint me any Poſt, and uſe me "as thy own; turn and change me, and my Fortune, "at Pleaſure: I only beg to be qualified for thy Di- "ſpenſations, to uſe them rightly, and greatly to im- "prove under them. For I am thy Servant, devoted "to thee without the leaſt Reſerve: I deſire not to "live to myſelf, but to thee; Oh! that I might be "enabled faithfully and worthily to perform that Ho- "mage and Duty, to all which my Heart is moſt "freely and ſincerely diſpoſed.

Chap. XVII.

A Prayer for Grace to do the Will of God.

Disciple.] "HEAR me, most merciful Saviour, I "humbly beseech thee, and let thy "Grace be ever present with thy weak unworthy Ser- "vant. I am not of myself able to do, or think any "thing that is good. O! let thy Spirit assist my poor "Endeavours, vanquish the Temptations that so thick "beset me; fix my inconstant Mind, and follow me "all the Days of my Life, that I may persevere in "good Works unto the End. Regulate my Affecti- "ons and Desires, and confine them to such Objects "only, as are well-pleasing in thy Sight. Let thy "Will be the Guide and Measure of mine, and let "mine steadily conform to thy Pleasure. Remove "far from me all Inclinations and Aversions, but such "as agree with those of the Blessed Jesus. Help me "to die daily to the World, and to the Things of the "World; and mortify my Vanity to that degree, that "even Shame and Contempt for thy Sake, may be "not only supportable, but welcome to me. Let all "my Hopes and Wishes center in thee alone; and no- "thing appear desirable, in comparison of a pure "Heart and peaceful Conscience. For Thou, O Lord, "art my Peace, Thou my only Rest; in Thee alone "is Pleasure and true Satisfaction, and all without "Thee is Misery and Torment. Oh! grant me this "Blessed Retreat, this Happy Security; that I may "abandon all the false Appearances of Happiness here "below, and find soft Ease and sweet Repose in thy "Love and Favour, Thou True, Thou Chief, Thou "Eternal Good, of Pious Souls."

Chap. XVIII.

God is our only Comfort in Trouble.

Disciple.] WHatever Comforts and Happiness I propose, This is not the Time, and Place of enjoying them, but I expect that Blessed Fruition in another State. For, what would it avail, could I attain the utmost Delights the World can afford, when a very short Space must of Necessity put a Period to them? Do not then mistake thy Happiness, my Soul; for these Things are not, cannot be, thy Rest. The Fulness of Joy and undisturbed Pleasure is no where to be found, save in God only: He is the Comforter of the Afflicted, He the Wealth of the Poor, He the Support and Strength of the Weak, He the Glory and great Reward of the Humble.

Nor let it disturb thy Peace, or discourage thy Hope, that thou canst not yet aspire to thy promised Felicity. For God is faithful and cannot Lie. Only wait his own Time patiently, and thou shalt not fail of his Mercy, and an abundant Recompence of thy Faith and patient Trust in due Season. But if this Delay draw off thy Affections to present Comforts, and abate thy Zeal for future and distant Rewards, thou shalt desire earthly Blessings, and not be filled; and at the same time shalt lose those heavenly and eternal Joys, which alone can satisfy, and make thee happy. *Use* then these Temporal Things, but *love* none but the Things that are eternal. The present were not design'd for Enjoyment, but for Necessity and Convenience. Thy Nature is not cut out for them, nor is it in their Power to make thee perfect; tho' all this mortal State is capable of, were united together for that Purpose. For God alone is a Good, large enough to fill the Desires of an immortal Soul; He only is proportion'd to thy

thy Wants and noble Faculties; and the Happineſs to be met with in Him, is not that tranſitory, imperfect Thing, which the Children of this Generation fondly Covet and Admire; but that exquiſite, that infinite and inward Delight, of which the pure in Heart, and Spiritual Perſons, receive ſome ſweet Foretaſtes and Pledges, by having their Converſation in Heaven, while they themſelves are upon Earth. For Man is vain, and all his Comforts like him; Empty and unſatisfactory, falſe and fleeting, ſwift in Decay, and of ſhort Continuance: But thoſe from God reſemble the Perfections of their Author, Spiritual and True, Immutable and Eternal. A truly pious Soul can never be deſtitute, becauſe he conſtantly bears his Happineſs about him, even the Bleſſed Jeſus, the Divine Comforter; and, when bereft of all beſides, can thus converſe with him in the profoundeſt Solitude.

Bleſſed be thy Mercy, O deareſt Jeſus! Bleſſed be thy cheering Preſence! O let me never be deprived of this ineſtimable Bliſs. While I have this Conſolation within, I feel no Want of Earthly Enjoyments: For this ſupplies, exceeds them all. Oh! let me thankfully rejoice in thy Favour, and the Light of thy Countenance lifted up upon me! Or, if at any Time thou withdraw thoſe bright Beams, and interpoſe a Cloud of Sorrow; yet even then preſerve me from ſad Diſtruſt, and let the Conſideration of thy Will, which is always beſt, be my Support in my blackeſt and moſt melancholy Circumſtances. Let me not caſt away my Hope and Confidence, becauſe thou hideſt thy Face for a Seaſon; but help me to diſcern the great Wiſdom and Benefit of ſuch trying Diſpenſations, and to ſupport my Faith with the Proſpect of that Reward, which is laid up in Heaven for thoſe, upon whom Patience hath its perfect Work. For thou, O Lord, art Gracious and Merciful, and though we perpetually offend and provoke thee, yet wilt *thou not always*

Pſal. ciii.

ways be chiding, nor keep thy Anger for ever; but wilt turn again, and in much Compassion quicken thy Suffering Servants, that they may rejoice in thee, and triumph over their Calamities.

Chap. XIX.

Of casting our Care upon GOD.

Christ.] MY Son, be content, that I should dispose of Thee and all thy Affairs, as my Divine Wisdom sees fit; for I best know what is convenient for thee. Thou judgest rashly, and art liable to Human Frailties. Sense and present Satisfactions blind thy Eyes, and biass thy Reason; but Christians, who should walk by Faith, and not by Sight, must not be govern'd by the same Measures, which common Men make use of, in distinguishing Good and Evil Accidents.

Disciple.] Lord, I acknowledge my Infirmity; and am sensible, that thy Care and Concern for me is more prudent, more tender, than that I have for my own self, And he hath made but small Progress in the School of Christ, whose weak Faith is still to learn that Lesson, of being satisfied with all thy Dispensations, and casting his Care upon Thee. All therefore that I beg, is the establishing my Heart in the way of thy Commandments; and, so long as I swerve not from Truth and Righteousness, secure my Soul, and for the rest, do thy Pleasure. For thou art Wise, and Just, and Good; and such, I am sure, are all the Methods of thy Providence; tho' Human Understandings may not distinctly perceive, nor be able to account for the Reasons of them. If therefore thou condemn me to Darkness and Affliction, I will praise and

thank thee for thy deſerved Correction, even in the midſt of my Trouble? Or, if thou ſpare the Rod, and make my Darkneſs to be Light, I will then thankfully receive the Bleſſing, and magnify the Favour which I cannot deſerve.

Chriſt.] This is indeed, my Son, the Diſpoſition and Deportment befitting the Character of my Faithful Children. And all, who profeſs to walk with me in Piety and Virtue, muſt bring themſelves to a Soul ſo even, ſo reſign'd, that Suffering and Joy, Poverty or Riches, may be entertain'd alike. The One, without Murmuring or Complaint; the Other, without the leaſt Pride or Change of Temper. For both are equally the Appointment of My Providence, and, as ſuch, ſhould be met with Chearfulneſs and perfect Content.

Diſciple.] Lord, I am willing to endure whatever thou art pleaſed to lay upon me. I do deſire to receive Good and Evil, the Sweet and Bitter, the Comforts and the Croſſes of this Life, with the very ſame Reſentments of Mind. Nay, not only to receive, but to be thankful for both, ſince both come from thy own Hand, which cannot err in ordaining all my Events. This only I implore, that, in all Changes of Condition, thou would'ſt in thy Mercy preſerve me from Sin: For, while I keep my Innocence, and continue in thy Love not Calamity, nor Death, nor Hell itſelf, ſhall make me afraid. However thou may'ſt exerciſe my Patience, or frown upon me at preſent; yet ſo long as thou doſt not caſt me off for ever, nor blot my Name out of thy Book of Life, I am above all Danger; and the utmoſt Powers, and Malice of Fortune, and Enemies, and Devils combined together, can never hurt me.

Chap. XX.

Christ our Pattern of Patience in Affliction.

Christ.] MY Son, remember I came down from Heaven for thy Salvation; I bore the Punishment due to Thee, and all the Miseries, to which Human Nature is exposed. I bore them, not by Constraint, but Choice, and urged by no Necessity, but that which powerful Love imposed upon me. And One great End, for which I condescended to do so, was to teach thee Patience by this Example; and, that my willing Sufferings might dispose thee to submit to the necessary Incumbrances of thy present Condition, without Reluctance and Murmuring. Sorrow became familiar to me; My constant Attendant from the Manger to the Cross; for every Hour produced some fresh Instance of it. My Circumstances were low, and I contented myself with the Want of even the Necessaries of Life; my Innocence was slandered, and daily Complaints and Reproaches were sounding in my Ears; Shame and Contempt I entertain'd without Return or angry Resentment; my good Deeds were repaid with Malice and Ingratitude, my Miracles blasphemed, and my Doctrine traduced and vilely misrepresented.

Disciple.] Yes, Lord, I read the Story of thy invincible Meekness with Wonder and Astonishment; and cannot but infer from thence, that, since thou wert pleased to give such amazing Proofs of an entire Obedience to thy heavenly Father's Will; I, who am a wretched Sinner, and not only subject to these Miseries by the Condition of my Nature, but one, who have deserved them as Chastisements for my Transgressions, am much more obliged, with a most perfect Submission, to receive whatever thy Providence thinks fit to inflict; and must by no means grumble at the

Weight, or the Continuance of any Burthen thou ſhalt lay upon me in the preſent World. If any Thing here ſeem heavy, yet it is rendred much eaſier and more ſupportable, by the Aſſiſtance of thy Grace, by the Contemplation of thy Example, and by the many Patterns of Conſtancy and Virtue, which thy now glorious Saints, but once afflicted Servants, who travelled the ſame rugged Journey of Life, have in all Ages ſet for my Imitation and Encouragement. I plainly ſee, under this Goſpel-ſtate, a mighty Support, which even thy own peculiar People wanted under the Old Law. For then the Way to Heaven was dark, and the Proſpect at their Journey's End leſs glorious and inviting. Few then applied themſelves with Zeal to ſeek a Future and Spiritual Kingdom; nor could they do ſo with equal Encouragement, till thy Meritorious Death had opened an Entrance into the High and Holy Place. But how contentedly, how thankfully ought I to tread in thy Bleſſed Steps, ſuſtained by the Aſſurance of Eternal Rewards, and directed in the right Way by the Light of thy Doctrine? For thou *art the Way, the Truth, and the Life*; Thy Afflictions have taught Me, and all Believers, that Tribulation is the Paſſage to thy Heavenly Kingdom; and that the proper Method of attaining thy Crown, is being made a Partaker of thy Croſs. Had'ſt thou not gone before us, who would have the Heart to follow? Who could perſevere in a Courſe of Sufferings? Nay, though thou haſt thus ſhewed us the Way, yet how loth, how backward are we to follow ſtill? And, if neither thy Miracles, nor thy Precepts, thy wondrous Humiliation, nor thy glorious Exaltation, can warm us into greater Zeal and Reſolution, than by lamentable Experience we daily ſee and feel they do; How wretchedly ſlothful, alas! how cold, and motionleſs, ſhould we have ſtood; had not thy Grace and marvellous Condeſcenſion vouchſafed to grant us the Advan-

John xiv.

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tage of so clear a Light, and the powerful Motive of so bright an Example?

Chap. XXI.

Of bearing Injuries: and how we may judge of true Patience.

Christ.] CEASE thy Complaints, my Son, and, when Afflictions threaten to attack thee, call to remembrance what I endured for thy Sake: Nay, not what I endured for thine only, but what so many brave and generous Saints have since courageously endured for mine. Alas! thy Trials yet are small, nor hast thou resisted unto Blood, as I and they have done. Their Difficulties were greater, their Temptations sharper, their Sorrows more piercing, their Exercises more severe; and yet in all these they were more than Conquerors. It will therefore be of great Service to the confirming thy Hope and Patience, if thou diligently compare thy very light, with their much heavier Burthen; and reproach thyself for sinking under a Weight which they would scarce have felt. But, if thy own Load seem so unsupportable and thou canst hardly be brought to think the case of others so much more deplorable; consider, whether this false Estimate do not proceed from partial Affection, Tenderness to thyself, and a fretful Impatience, rather than from the true Nature and Reason of the Thing. For These corrupt Mens Judgments, and make them see their own and other Peoples Circumstances with very different Eyes. But be thy Ideas true or mistaken, yet still the greater and the less Calamities call equally for Submission and Constancy. And it is not the Degree or Measure, but the Author and the Consequence

of Suffering, which is the proper Motive to Patience.

Now the better thou art compoſed under any Trouble, the more commendable is thy Wiſdom, and the larger will be thy Recompence. Nay, not only ſo, but the eaſier will be thy Lot too. For Conſideration will reconcile thee to it, and Time and Experience make the Thing familiar. Nor matters it much, who are the immediate Inſtruments, or from what next Hand thy Afflictions come. For thoſe are very Idle Pretences, which Men uſually labour to cover their want of Temper withal: "Had this been done by an Ene-"my or a Stranger, I could have borne it; but from "a Friend, a Relation, one whom I have highly "obliged, and have a Right to expect better Uſage "from, what Fleſh can brook ſuch Baſeneſs and In-"gratitude? Had I given any juſt Occaſion for that "diſparaging Report, it would never have vex'd me; "but to be ſlander'd and abuſed, without any ground, "without the leaſt Fault or Provocation of Mine, "methinks 'tis very hard: The Thing itſelf I could "away with; but the Perſon or the particular Cir-"cumſtances, put me out of all Patience." Alas! theſe are nice and frivolous Diſtinctions; ſuch as are altogether foreign and impertinent to the Matter in Hand; and what the Virtue of Patience is no way concern'd in. For this takes Injuries and Affronts by the great, without entering into any particular Examination of their Nature and Quality, and peculiar Aggravations; nor does it at all regard the Perſon by whom it is exerciſed; but conſiders that Perſon only by whom it is to be crowned.

No Man hath yet arrived to a due Perfection in this Grace, who is not content with any kind of Trial, from any Hand whatſoever. The Differences of Friend or Foe, of Superior, Inferior, or Equal; of a good-natur'd and conſcientious, or a wicked, perverſe, vexatious Man, are of no conſideration at all. But, let the

the Provocation be what it will, and come from whom it will, let it be offered but once, or repeated ever so often, 'tis all alike. Because in all, the over-ruling Hand of God is attended to; and every Thing received, as ordained and originally inflicted by him; and what proceeds from him is always good, and sure to turn to Account. And as nothing he appoints, tho' seemingly never so grievous, shall be to good Mens Disadvantage; so nothing, tho' ever so slight and despicable in itself, when dutifully and decently entertained, shall be passed over unrewarded. Arm thyself therefore for Combat, and decline no Occasion of engaging that offers, if thou desire the Glory of the Conquest. Without Fighting thy Way through, there is no coming at the Crown. And they, who refuse to suffer with Christ, do in effect, and by necessary Consequence refuse to reign with him. Stand up then bravely to Afflictions, and quit thyself like a Man; Repose and Happiness is what thou coveteſt, but these are only to be obtained by Labour. Victory and Triumph are the Things thou aimest at: But who was ever yet so absurd, as to think of Triumphs without Enemies and Hardships, or of Conquering without a Battle?

Disciple.] I acquiesce, dear Lord, in all thou say'st; nor will I indulge such vain Imaginations. But since even where this Spirit is most willing, the Flesh is miserably weak; assist me, I beseech thee, that by thy Power and Strength I may be able to do, what by my own I cannot accomplish, and Nature is averse from so much as attempting. Thou knowest full well, how little I can bear; how every Shock makes my feeble Heart give ground; Lord, do thou support and confirm me, that Tribulation may appear, not only tolerable, but even desirable, in compliance with my Will and my Duty. For, what Regret soever Humanity may betray in these Cases, when Danger

approaches; In my own better Judgment, which conſiders Things in the Chriſtian and Spiritual Senſe, I am abundantly ſatisfied, how much the Harſher Diſpenſations of thy Providence conduce to my Soul's Advantage. And, tho' *no Chaſtiſement for the preſent ſeems joyous but grievous*, yet my better Senſe, when I think freely, convinces me of thy Wiſdom and Mercy, and that it is *even good for me to be afflicted.*

Chap. XXII.

The Infirmities and Miſeries of our preſent State.

Diſciple.] *I Will confeſs my Unrighteouſneſs unto the Lord*, and bewail my Infirmities before him. For every trivial Accident caſts me down, and I am often overwhelm'd with Sorrow, upon Occaſions which my calmer Thoughts abundantly convince me, deſerve rather my Contempt, than my ſerious Concern. Sometimes I ſee and condemn my own Folly; and mighty Reſolutions I make, how bravely I will behave myſelf for the Time to come; and yet, upon the next Aſſault of ſome ſlight Misfortune, this imaginary Hero is beaten from his Poſt, and cannot ſtand the Shock of a very common Difficulty. The pooreſt and moſt deſpicable Things, are, I find, capable of becoming great and dangerous Temptations; And I, who at a diſtance defy them, yet, when brought to the Trial, feel, by ſad Experience, upon how ſlippery Ground I ſtand.

Pſalm xxxii.

This is indeed the wretched Condition of thy poor unſtable Servant: But, Lord, do Thou, in much Compaſſion, look upon my Frailty, for thou knoweſt it more perfectly than I myſelf can. Stretch forth thy Hand, and draw me out of theſe deep

Pſalm lxvi.

deep Waters, and out of this Mire of Sin and Weakneſs, that I ſink not in my Corruption. I cannot eaſily expreſs the melancholy Reflections, the Shame and Confuſion, the Indignation and ſad Perplexity of Heart, which the Conſciouſneſs of my own Inability to reſiſt Temptations, and the Inconſtancy of my beſt and moſt vigorous Purpoſes create; and tho' my Will be not always vanquiſhed, nor do I (bleſſed be God) yield to every wicked Suggeſtion; yet the repeated Aſſaults of the Enemy diſturb my Quiet, and I am weary of a Life, which conſiſts in perpetual Hazard, and painful Conflicts with myſelf. The Wretchedneſs of my Condition is but too manifeſt: I need no other Argument to prove it, than that eaſy Acceſs evil Thoughts find in my Breaſt; which, in Deſpight of all my watchful Cares, and moſt manful Struggles, are much ſooner inſinuated and received, than either driven out again, or prevented from entering.

Look down then, thou Almighty Rock of *Iſrael*, and Lover of Souls, and interpoſe thy Power and Protection; give ſeaſonable Succour, and happy Succeſs to my too fruitleſs Endeavours. Arm and guard me with Strength from above; and ſuffer not the old Man, the corrupt Inclinations of my Fleſh, which refuſes to be entirely ſubdued and brought to Reaſon, to uſurp the Dominion over my better Part. For this obſtinate Rebel renews its Inſurrections daily, and bids me Battle; calls me to Combats and hazardous Engagements, which muſt never, never end in perfect Peace and Safety, ſo long as this miſerable State of Mortality endures. Moſt miſerable indeed, ſince every Action and Accident of my Life involves me in freſh Dangers; ſince every Step I take is upon Snares and Precipices; ſince every Time and Place is thick beſet with Troubles and Toils, with Treachery and Temptation; and a numerous Hoſt of Enemies ready

to devour and swallow me up. For fatal uninterrupted Successions of Trials every Moment renew their Attacks; and when I have happily vanquished many, and fondly promise myself a Truce, as many more immediately draw down upon me, and make fiercer and more furious Attempts upon some other Quarter, which I hoped had been sufficiently cover'd from their Approaches.

And, can a Life, subject to such Surprizes and Hazards, embittered with so many Troubles and severe Trials, encumbered with so much Frailty and Corruption, be valued and mightily coveted? Nay, can that deserve the very Name of Life, which naturally breeds Plagues and Diseases, and exposes us to such Variety of Deaths? Yet stupid Man hugs, and embraces, and esteems it his only Happiness; expects Ease in the Midst of Distraction, pursues Joys in a Valley of Tears, and vainly sets up for the boasted Perfection of Pleasure, in a Condition of inevitable Misery, and lingering, certain Pain. Sometimes, indeed, the tender Sense of some Afflictions cuts us to the Quick, and in our melancholy Moods we give the World hard Words, call it *deceitful*, *treacherous*, and *vain*; but even they who rail at it most liberally, and profess to hate and despise it, cannot be prevailed with to be content to leave it. The Flesh and its Affections have still a powerful Influence, and spur Men on to the Pursuit and Love of those very Enjoyments, which Reason and their own Experience have taught them, cannot be worth their Pains, nor in any Degree answer their deluded Expectations. For we must observe, that our Love and Hatred of this World proceed from very different Causes and Principles. *The Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*, engage our Affections; and these are ever present, and ever vehement with us. The Calamities and Griefs, and Pains we feel, pro-

1 *John* iii.

provoke our Hatred and Contempt, and repreſent Life a Burden and Miſery; and theſe have their Intervals, and work upon us feebly and by Fits. The former too ſtrike it with Inclination, and are aſſiſted by Nature; the latter have no Influence upon us, but what their own Weight gives; all their Impreſſions are forcible and violent, heavy and painful, and ſuch as we ſubmit to, only becauſe we cannot help it.

Thus Senſe and ſinful Pleaſure get within us, and, which is very lamentable, debauch our Reaſon. The preſent Ticklings of the Body cheat the Mind, and vitiate our Palates to that degree, that, being prepoſſeſſed with a falſe Taſte of worldly Sweets, we have no Reliſh left for that delicious Entertainment, with which God and Religion feed and feaſt the pure and heavenly-minded Soul. For, O! thoſe happy Men, who have learnt to deſpiſe and abandon earthly Things, and conſecrated themſelves entirely to God, by Mortification, Self-denial, and a ſteddy Courſe of ſevere Virtue; theſe exalted Spirits know and feel the Truth of God and his Promiſes; they find unſpeakable Charms and ſenſible Delights, in the voluntary Refuſal of thoſe Toys and Baits, which cannot be had with Satisfaction, nor coveted with Safety. They ſee, and deſpiſe, and pity the Folly of abuſed Mankind; diſcover the lurking Frauds of the Tempter; and that the imagined Happineſs and boaſted Pleaſures of ſenſual and earthly Men, are only Snares and Dangers, Vanity and Cheat.

CHAP.

Chap. XXIII.

Of placing all our Hope and Happineſs in God.

Diſciple.] REpoſe thyſelf, my Soul, in God, upon all Occaſions, and above all other Dependencies; for he is the only ſure Refuge, the eternal Reſt of the Saints. Grant me thy Grace, O ſweeteſt, kindeſt Saviour, to value, and love, and truſt in thee above all Things. Make me to prize thee far before Health and Beauty, to deſire thee more than Honour and Advancement, more than Riches and Power, more than Wit and Learning; to rejoice in thee more than in Pleaſure and Proſperity, more than in Reputation and Praiſe, more than in the largeſt Promiſes, the higheſt Deſerts, the moſt exalted Gifts, the moſt tranſporting Joys, which thou canſt impart, or my Heart when moſt enlarged, is able to receive. Let me admire thee above Angels, and Arch-Angels, and all the Hoſts of Heaven; above all Things viſible and inviſible, more than all that is, or can be, which is not thy own ſelf.

For Thou, my God, art the beſt and moſt excellent Being; in thee alone is Plenty and Fulneſs, ſweet Refreſhment, peaceful Comfort, and raviſhing Delights; the Perfection of Beauty and charming Graces; true Honour and adorable Greatneſs; in thee, as in its proper Centre, all Good meets, and dwells, and hath, and doth, and will continue to abide, from, and to all Eternity. Give then thyſelf, my deareſt Jeſus; for all thou giveſt, and all thou promiſeſt to give beſides, is poor and little, when compared with the Sight and Fruition of thee. And I have found, by long Experience, that all thy other Favours, nay, all Nature is too ſhort and narrow to ſatisfy my Soul, whoſe unbounded Deſires exalt and

ſtretch

ſtretch themſelves far beyond all preſent Enjoyments, and can be filled, and reſt contented, with nothing leſs than thee.

O my beloved Lord, King of the Univerſe, knit me to thee with the Bands of an entire and holy Affection. Set me at liberty from this Clog of Earth, and give me Wings of ardent Zeal and pure Devotion, that I may ſoar aloft, and take my Flight higher than Heaven itſelf, and find my Reſt in thee. Oh! when will that happy Time come, when I ſhall be ſet at liberty from Sin and Corruption, from the Body and the World, and without Interruption, without Allay, and taſte and feaſt upon the Sweetneſs of my God? When will the neceſſary Cares of this Life ceaſe to diſtract me, and leave me Power and Leiſure to indulge thoſe Longings and Pleaſures, which refined and unbodied Spirits feel; when ſwallowed up in the Contemplation of thy divine Excellencies, and even raiſed above themſelves, they know and love, and retire wholly into thee? At preſent I am oppreſſed with a Load of Infirmities and Corruptions, and often groan under the Senſe of my heavy Burthen. The inward Joys, with which thy Grace ſupports me, are mingled and embaſed with Pains and Tears; which cloud, and darken, and deject my Mind; diſtract my Thoughts, obſtruct my eagereſt Wiſhes and Endeavours, and faſten me down to Earth and Miſery, when I would fly to thy Embraces. I cannot in this Vale of Sorrow enjoy my Lord, my Love; but wait with Hope, and long ſore for that happy Change, which ſhall tranſlate me to the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, and render me Partaker of their Bliſs. But let not, Lord, my Sufferings and Tears be loſt; remember and compaſſionate my preſent Wretchedneſs, and grant my Sighs an eaſy and effectual Acceſs into thy bleſſed Preſence.

Thou, Lord, art the Brightneſs of thy Father's Glory; dart thy reviving Beams into my Soul; enlighten its dark Place, and ſcatter its Diſcomforts. To thee the very Thoughts and inmoſt Deſires of every Heart are known; by thee the moſt ſecret and ſilent Wiſhes are thoroughly underſtood. O hear me, when I ſpeak in this Language, and pour out my Supplications in Sighs and Griefs, which Words cannot utter. Even when my Tongue lies ſtill, my Thoughts are in motion; and my Heart within my Breaſt burns with inarticulate Ejaculations. "How long (ſay I to myſelf) "how long will my Lord, my Bridegroom, delay his "coming? O! that he would vouchſafe to enter un- "der the Roof of his unworthy and afflicted Servant! "O that he would ſtretch forth his almighty Hand, "and deliver this Wretch, juſt ready to ſink, out of "all the Miſery and Trouble, which ſurround, op- "preſs, and are ready to devour him! Come, Lord "Jeſus, come quickly. For without thee, no Day, "no Hour, is eaſy or comfortable; for thou art my "Hope, my Joy, and all my worldly Plenty; but "without thee is the very Extremity of Poverty and "Want."

See how I lie in this Priſon of the Fleſh, fetter'd and bound up with the Chain of my Sin, till the Pitifulneſs of thy great Mercy looſe me, and the Light of thy Countenance, breaking into this darkſome Dungeon, aſſure me of thy Favour and Friendſhip. "Let "others covet and ſet their Affections upon ſuch "wretched Objects, as deluded Senſe thinks valuable; "but as for me, I will love and long for nothing "but thee, my God, alone; for thou, my God, "alone art my Hope and Happineſs; the only Stay "of my preſent, and the only Bliſs of my future and "eternal State." Such is, and ſuch ſhall ever be, my Addreſs and fervent Prayer. Nor will I let thee go until thou bleſs me; till thou inſpire new Life with

with thy Favour; and dwell in, and converse familiarly with my Soul, by thy Spirit and gracious Presence.

Christ.] Behold me here, my Son, always attentive to thy Prayers, always ready to extend the Comfort and Relief thou so zealously imploreſt. Thy Tears and fervent Desires, the Sorrows of thy perplexed Heart, and the strong Cries of a wounded Conscience, have pierced the Skies, and brought me down to thy speedy Succour and Comfort; for I am ever nigh to such as be of an humble and contrite Spirit, and my Ears are always open to the Prayers of my suffering Servants.

Disciple.] I did indeed presume, in the Anguish of my Soul, to beg what I am sensible I cannot deserve, and flee to thee, my God, for Help. And lo! I am sincerely disposed to forsake all and follow thee. Nor will I ascribe to myself the Glory of so zealous, so resign'd a Temper; for thou, Lord, didſt work this good thing in me, and by thy own preventing Grace, kindle and excite my very first Desires. I prayed, but thou preparedſt my Heart. I sought thee, but it was by thy Impulse and Direction. And for this first Disposition, I return thee my most humble and unfeigned Thanks; acknowledging it thy best, thy sole Gift, that I have been able so much as to think or intend any good thing. Since then the whole of what I do or desire well is thine, my Part shall be to cherish every holy Motion, to improve the early and happy Assistances of thy Grace, to submit myself without any Reserve to thy holy Guidance, and in the midſt of the very best Performances thou qualifieſt me for, constantly and humbly to remember my own Vileness and Impotence. For who, O Lord, is like unto thee? Or what in Heaven or Earth, which hath, or boasts of, any Excellence, can be compared unto my God and Saviour? Thy Works are just and true,

true, thy Precepts right and equitable, thy Providence great and glorious, and all things are governed by it, after a moſt wiſe, and holy, and good, and wonderful manner. All Honour, and Glory, and Praiſe, be therefore aſcribed to thee, eternal Wiſdom of thy eternal Father; may Heaven and Earth, and all the Creatures, ſet forth thy Excellencies, and in this general Conſort I will join; my Mouth ſhall ſing thy aſtoniſhing Works, thy great Glories; and I will never ceaſe to praiſe and adore my God while I have any Being.

Chap. XXIV.

A Thankſgiving for God's Mercies.

Diſciple.] *O Pen thou the Eyes of my Underſtanding, O Lord, that I may ſee and obey the wondrous things of thy Law.* Give me the perfect Knowledge of thy Will, and poſſeſs me with a reverent and thankful Senſe of all thy Goodneſs and Loving-kindneſs to me and to all Men; that I may ſhew forth thy Praiſe, and publiſh thy Mercies. I know theſe are ſo numerous and great, that I can never magnify them worthily; the leaſt of them exceeds my Power to expreſs; and when I conſider them, I am ſo far from any vain Pretence of Merit, that all my Thoughts are overpowered and loſt in Wonder. For all our Advantages of Mind and Body, of Perſon and Fortune, thoſe which are Endowments and Ornaments of Nature, and thoſe which exalt and ſupply the Defects of Nature, are all the Effects of thy Bounty and Beneficence; *from whom every good and perfect Gift cometh.*

Pſalm cxix.

James i. 17.

Thou art the common Source, the univerſal Repoſitory, from whence our Benefits are drawn down. Not to all in equal Proportions, it is true; but, be the

the Measure less or more 'tis still thy Distribution. He who receives most is indebted for the whole to thy Liberality; and he who hath least, could not have had that little but from Thee. He, to whom thou hast dealt thy Blessings most plentifully, is not from that Dispensation to take an Estimate of himself; his Plenty will not justify any Confidence or Boast of his own Merit, nor may he insult over his Brethren, or behave himself uncomely, and disesteem or despise those from whom thy Mercies have distinguished him. For the Greatness of Mens Deserts is most eminently discovered by a modest and mean Opinion of themselves, Courtesy and Condescension to others, Gratitude and Devotion towards God. And the more they are sensible of their own Wants and Unworthiness, the better they qualify themselves for fresh and greater Demonstrations of thy Love and Liberality. Again, the Man to whom thou hast distributed more sparingly, must not repine and be discouraged, nor fret and grudge the larger Portion of his wealthier Neighbour; but keep his Eyes and Mind wholly intent upon thee, and admire the Freedom of thy Grace, which, as it cannot be obliged to any, so gives to all largely, and without partial Respect of Persons.

For thou art to be praised in all thy Gifts by every Man, because all comes from thee: And thou art Master of thy own Favours; thou giveſt without Upbraiding, and with-holdeſt without Injustice: Thy Wisdom knows what Measures are proper and expedient for each Person; and the Reasons, why one Man differs from another, lie not within the Compass of our Knowledge, but must be left entirely to thy Judgment, to determine the Fitness of them.

In this Persuasion, Lord, I readily acknowledge and adore thy Mercy, in suffering me to want many of those Advantages, which the Generality of Mankind set a mighty value upon. Nay, I am satisfied, that

Men ought to be afflicted, and humble their Souls, with the Consideration of their own Wants and Unworthiness; yet so, as not only not to give Way to sad Despondencies and Distrust of thy Mercy; but even from this very Subject to draw Matter of Comfort and Joy; because thou hast so particularly declared thy Affection to the contrite and humble Souls, and given them Marks of more than ordinary Favour.

Such were those Apostles, so mean in their own and the World's Esteem, whom thou madest Choice of for Witnesses of thy Truth, and Attendants upon thy Person. These very Heroes in the Christian Story, whom thou hast appointed Judges and Rulers of the whole World, in Matters of Religion, were recommended to that high Promotion, by being Meek and Poor in Spirit, void of Guile, and mortified to the World; patient in Suffering, content with Insolence, and barbarous Treatment; and proud of nothing, but being thought worthy to endure Shame and Pain for the Name of Jesus. So distant from common Men, so singular were their Notions, which disposed them with Joy and Eagerness to embrace what others dread and detest, and shun with all their Industry and Might. The never-failing Spring of Joy and Comfort, which they who truly love and fear thee, and are thankful for thy infinite Goodness, find within, flows from the constant Resignation of their Minds to thy Disposals, and the Reflections upon thy Wise Eternal Purposes, which check their Proneness to Partiality and Discontent, and make every Dispensation of thy Providence welcome to them. They are abased with equal Satisfaction, as others are exalted: And regard not High or Low, Honourable or Despised, according to common Reputation; but consider that their Station and Circumstances in the World are chosen and ordained by Thee, and cannot therefore but be good, nay, better than any other, because the Effect of thy

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Divine Appointment, which always knows and chuſes the beſt. Could we but once arrive at this conſiderate Temper of Mind; the different Accidents of Life would ceaſe to be either much uneaſy, or extravagantly pleaſant. The violent Shocks upon our Paſſions would be effectually prevented; becauſe thy Honour would take Place above our own Appetites and miſtaken Intereſts. Poverty and Shame would be acceptable, as coming from the ſame Hand with Riches and Honour. And even thoſe Things which are moſt agreeable to the Reliſh and Inclinations of Human Nature, would pleaſe and comfort us more, with the Conſideration of their being beſtowed by Thee, the Author of all our Happineſs, than upon the Account of any Advantages to be had from the Things themſelves. The Zeal for thy Honour, in the Extremity of Diſtreſs, ſhould ſupport good Men more, and find greater Regard from them, than all the Wealth, or Glory, or other external Bleſſings, which thou at any time doſt or canſt confer, upon the moſt proſperous of the Sons of Men in this World. So ſmall is the Conſideration of the greateſt Gift, in compariſon of the Wiſe, the Good, the Almighty Giver and Diſpoſer of our Fortunes; who orders all Things for the beſt, and is, in all, our kindeſt Friend, and conſtant Benefactor.

Chap. XXV.

The Things which make for Peace.

Chriſt.] Hearken to me, my Son, and I will inform thee in the right Way to true Peace and perfect Liberty.

Diſciple.] Be pleaſed, Lord, ſo to do; for ſuch Inſtruction will prove both acceptable and profitable to me.

Chriſt.] Make it thy Buſineſs rather to comply with the Deſires and Commands of others, than to indulge thy own Inclinations. Chuſe a moderate, nay a low Fortune, rather than Greatneſs and Abundance. Be humble, obedient, and condeſcending in all thy Deportment. Let this be thy conſtant Wiſh and Prayer, That God would perform his Pleaſure, and diſpoſe of Thee and all thy Affairs, as to him ſeems moſt convenient. The Man that hath brought himſelf to this Temper and Spirit, be aſſured is in the ready Way to Peace of Mind, and true Content.

Diſciple.] The Words my Lord hath ſpoken are few in Number, but full of Senſe, and of very comprehenſive Extent; and I can eaſily diſcern in this little Space the Grounds of great Perfection in Virtue. Did I but diligently obſerve theſe Rules, how happily would all exceſſive Concern, and violent Diſorder at any Accidents of Human Life, be ſuppreſſed, or quite prevented? And if at any time hereafter I find myſelf oppreſſed with immoderate Cares or Reſentments, thy Wiſdom hath taught me to diſcover the true Cauſe of my Trouble; and, that I ſuffer for neglecting to comply with this Doctrine. But ſuch Compliance, Lord, thou knoweſt, is not the Work of Nature and mere Reaſon: And therefore I implore the mighty Aſſiſtances of thy Grace, to which nothing is hard, for making thoſe Improvements, which, in the preſent State of Corruption, are to Fleſh and Blood impracticable. Nothing is more acceptable in thy Sight than the Conqueſt of our Infirmities, and bold Advances in Goodneſs. Put forth thy Hand then, and what thou haſt taught me to know, enable me to perform; That I may both approve my own Obedience, and (what without thee I cannot do) ſucceſsfully purſue my own Happineſs and Salvation.

Chap. XXVI.

A Prayer againſt Evil Thoughts.

Diſciple.] *GO not far from me, O Lord, my God make haſte to help me:* For Corrupt Imaginations are perpetually riſing in my Breaſt, and innumerable Fears and Horrors cloſe my Soul in on every ſide. The Senſe of my hazardous Condition overwhelms me with Torment and deep Diſtreſs, while I ſee the Greatneſs of my Danger, and the Multitude of my Enemies, but know not how to decline the one, or to fight my way thro' the other. *Pſal.* lxx.

Chriſt.] Remember, Son, my Promiſe; *I will go before thee, and make the crooked Places ſtrait; I will break in pieces the Gates of Braſs, and cut in ſunder the Bars of Iron: And I will give thee the Treaſures of Darkneſs, and hidden Riches of ſecret Places.* *Iſa.* xiv.

Diſciple.] Lord, ſince thou haſt applied thoſe Myſtical Words to my Comfort, let me I beſeech thee, experimentally find the gracious Accompliſhment of them in my own Perſon: And ſcatter all my dark and diſmal, my vain and ſinful Thoughts, by ſhedding the Light of thy Grace abroad into my Heart. For in the Extremity of Grief and Anguiſh, this is my Hope and only Support, to take Sanctuary in thy Goodneſs, to repoſe all my Confidence, and caſt the Burthen of my Cares upon thee; to pour out my whole Soul before thee, and wait with Patience thy own good Time, for ſuccouring me in, and giving me an happy Iſſue out of all my Afflictions.

Chap. XXVII.

A Prayer for Spiritual Illumination.

Disciple. SHOOT forth, O Blessed Jesus, the bright Beams of thy Heavenly and Eternal Light, that it may enlighten all the dark Corners of my Heart, and effectually scatter every Cloud of Ignorance, and Error, which now hang so thick over me. Call home my wandering Thoughts, and repulse the Temptations which furiously assault me. Fight thou my Battles, and subdue those fierce wild Beasts, those brutish Lusts, which range in this Desert, and are ever striving to devour me; that by thy Power the Wilderness may be turned into a Palace, and instead of the violent Cries and Howlings of raging Passions, no Sounds may be heard there, but Songs of Praise. Thou, Lord, *who commandest the Winds and the Waves, and they obey thee,* silence the Storms within my Breast; say to that troubled Sea, *Be still,* and immediately there shall be *Peace* and a profound *Calm*, *Send out thy Light and thy Truth,* and warm this barren Soil; for such am I, till mellowed and impregnated by the Sun of Righteousness. Pour down thy Grace upon me plentifully, and water me with thy refreshing Moisture, which like seasonable Showers and gentle Dew, may fatten my Soul, and enable it to bring forth generous Fruit in great abundance. Raise and refine my Mind, press'd down with the Dross of earthly Desires, and draw my Affections up to Heaven and heavenly Objects; that the sweet Relish of that Bliss above may give me a Disgust and Loathing to all the nauseous Pleasures here below. Deliver, or rather snatch me away with a holy Violence, from all the perishing Comforts of this mortal State; for Thirst of Happiness I find is greater than

Mark i.

than any Creature can either quench or in a good Degree assuage. Unite me to thyself with inviolable Bands of Holy Love; so shall my Soul be satisfied! for thou alone canst answer all my Longings, and the whole World without Thee is trifle, and Emptiness, and Nothing.

Chap. XXVIII.

Against a Busy Inquisitive Temper.

Christ. MY Son, have a care of indulging a curious Humour, and do not create to thyself unnecessary Troubles, by meddling with Matters of Persons, which are no Part of thy Concern. For what is This or That to Thee? *Follow thou me.* What have you to do with the Virtues or Vices, the Conduct or the Indiscretions of others; how they behave themselves, what Company they keep, or with what Discourse they entertain one another? Why all this eager and intemperate Zeal to vindicate or accuse them? You shall not answer for their Miscarriages, nor be one whit the better for their Excellencies. Your own Words and Actions are the only Things you will be called to account for. Therefore look well to them, and beware, lest this busy and malicious Impertinence do not inflame that Reckoning. Trouble not yourself to turn Informer, and take not upon you to be a Judge. Leave that to Me. I know every Man thoroughly, and nothing which is done under the Sun can escape my Observation. I am perfectly appriséd of each Person's Condition, see every Action, nay, every Intention, every Design; and not only what they do, but what they drive at. These Things are far removed out of your Sight; and therefore you cannot judge truly, if

you may attempt it innocently. But know, once more, that Judgment is my Prerogative; and therefore it were Impudence and Usurpation in you to attempt it, if you were qualified to judge others. Study rather to be quiet; contain yourself within your own Business; and let the prying, censorious, the vain and intriguing World follow their own Devices. For all which they shall assuredly be one Day summoned to a severe Account; for all their Arts and specious Colours cannot impose upon Me. Engage not with them in the same Designs, nor let the empty Phantom of a great Reputation, the Pride of a numerous and honourable Relations or Acquaintance, or the particular Intimacies and Friendships of celebrated Persons, engage your Time and Thoughts. These only serve to distract and perplex the Mind, and cheat you at last with fond Expectations; they lead you into a Mist, and there they leave you lost and bewildred. But I would shew thee the true Way, and communicate my Instructions freely, wert thou but at leisure to receive my Secrets, and careful to observe my Motions; by opening the Door when I knock, and watching all Opportunities of entertaining me in thy Heart.

Chap. XXIX.

Of Lasting Peace, and True Goodness.

Christ.] THIS was my Promise to my Disciples heretofore, *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you; not as the World giveth, give I unto you.* But tho' Peace be in every Man's Wishes, yet the Qualifications and Predispositions, necessary for procuring and preserving it, are the Care of very few. My Peace takes up its

John xiv.

dwelling with the Meek and Humble. And the Peace of my Servants consists in steddy Patience, in attending diligently to my Words, and following my Directions. Therefore, upon every Occasion, be sure to make a Conscience of what you do or say; let the pleasing Me be your chief, your only Concern; and the Fruition of Me your ultimate, your only End and Desire. Pass no rash Censure upon other Peoples Words or Actions, and do not affect to be a Man of Business or Secrets; for this will be the best Expedient to make your Troubles few and light. I say, *few and light*; for to escape Trouble altogether, and to have no Affliction at all in Mind, Body, or Estate, is not consistent with the Nature of your present Condition, but one of the Privileges reserved for Heaven and Immortality.

Do not therefore imagine, that you are then in perfect Peace, when you are sensible of no Calamity or Disturbance; or that a present freedom from Assaults is an Argument that you have no Enemy, and all is safe and well with you; nor when Things succeed according to your Heart's desire, that this is a Proof of your extraordinary Virtue and Perfection; nor, if your Zeal and Piety be fervent, and your Contemplations full of Delight, conclude yourself a particular Favourite of God. For these are foreign and deceitful Inferences, such as neither prove the Sincerity, nor the Degree and Perfection of any Man's Virtue. This is discovered by quite different Marks. The devoting and resigning yourself entirely to the Will of God; not seeking your own, but his Glory in every thing you do; considering all Events wisely, and receiving Prosperity and Adversity with Evenness of Temper; and such a brave unshaken Perseverance in Goodness, as even when the Assistances and Encouragements of Grace are withdrawn for a Season, can resolutely go on, and harden itself to undergo yet sharper Trials

Trials with Conſtancy; ſuch Lowlineſs of Mind, as never puffs a Man up with an Opinion of his own Merit, but in the ſoreſt Diſtreſſes can find Matter of Praiſe and Thanks for that Mercy, which even then inflicts much leſs than he deſerves to ſuffer; and a firm Hope that God will not forſake his Servants; this is the Way of Peace, the Way that leads to ſure Conſolation and Favour with God. And if, to not thinking highly of your own Performances, you can add that other Excellence, of deſpiſing yourſelf, and abhorring your own Vileneſs, then be aſſured your Peace is built upon ſo ſolid, ſo impregnable a Foundation, that mortal Men here on Earth is not capable of attaining to it in greater Perfection.

Chap. XXX.

True Freedom of Mind.

Diſciple.] THIS is, indeed, the utmoſt Perfection Mortality can aſpire after, to abandon all worldly Thoughts, and without Interruption keep the Mind upon the Buſineſs of the Soul, and heavenly Contemplations; to paſs thro' a Life thick ſet with Cares and Troubles, yet free and unconcerned. Provided ſtill this Unconcernedneſs proceed not from Stupidity, Heavineſs of Apprehenſion, or ſlothful Neglect; but from a generous Liberty of Soul, by which the Man gets looſe from all immoderate Deſires, and too tender Love of earthly Enjoyments. This Faculty I earneſtly covet, and beg thee, O my God, to protect me againſt the Cares of the World, leſt the Neceſſities of my Body employ me too anxiouſly; and under that Pretence, my Affections be enſnared, and ſo I entangled in Multiplicity of Buſineſs,

to

to the Prejudice and Neglect of better and weightier Concerns; or, lest I be enticed to Sin by the Pleasures of Sense, or discouraged from the steddy Pursuit of Virtue and Heaven, by too tender and afflicting Resentments of any Calamities that may happen to me.

I speak not now of those vain Superfluities, which the deluded World so vehemently contend for; but beg to be preserved in these Miseries and Dangers. For Miseries and Dangers I cannot but esteem the common and unavoidable Incumbrances of Life; since these are heavy, and cling close about the Soul, and put it under such a strait Confinement, that it cannot freely obey the Dispositions it feels within, of getting above Concern for the World, and fixing its Desires and Endeavours upon spiritual Objects. Thou, O my God, art Sweetness inexpressible. But, that my Soul may truly relish thee, turn, I beseech thee, all my worldly Comforts into Bitterness; lest they vitiate my Palate, and give a Disgust to heavenly Things, by some deluding Charm of present pretended Good. O! let not Flesh and Blood prevail in their Conflicts with the Spirit; let not the World and its fading Glories cheat me into Ruin: let not the subtil Enemy of Souls supplant me with his tempting Wiles. Give me Courage to resist, when called to the Combat; Patience to endure, when called to Suffering; Firmness of Mind to persist immoveable in my Duty, when Temptations and evil Suggestions labour to seduce me. Exchange, if it be thy Will, the transitory and false Comforts of this World, for the Oil of true Gladness, the Assistances and sweet Satisfaction of thy blessed Spirit; and instead of carnal Love and sensual Inclination, let the Love and Desire of thee be diffused thro' my whole Heart, and reign unrivall'd there.

Even

Even Food and Raiment, and the Neceſſaries by which Life is ſuſtained, are a Grievance and Obſtruction to zealous and refined Souls. But what muſt be a Burthen, let me not make an Occaſion of Sin; by uſing the Creatures intemperately, by a luxurious Indulgence, or inordinate Appetite. Nature, I know, it is my Duty to ſupport; and therefore, entirely to refuſe and neglect theſe Proviſions, were Sin and foul Ingratitude. But to enlarge our Deſires beyond the proper Uſes of theſe Things, and let them looſe upon Superfluity and Vanity, Delicacy and Delight; this the Law of God hath moſt wiſely forbidden; becauſe it were in Effect to connive at all Licentiouſneſs, by cheriſhing the Fleſh, and animating and ſupporting it in Inſolence and Rebellion againſt the Spirit. Between theſe two Extremes there lies a ſafe middle Way, in which I humbly implore the Guidance of thy Hand; leſt I decline from Virtue on either Side, and going aſtray after my own Inclination or unadviſed Zeal, forſake my Path, and fly out beyond the Meaſures thou haſt preſcribed for me.

Chap. XXXI.

Self-love the greateſt Obſtruction to Virtue and Happineſs.

Chriſt. SON, if thou aim at purchaſing All, know that it is not to be bought at any Price leſs than thy All. Earth muſt be barter'd for Heaven; and where I give myſelf, I expect the whole Man in exchange. Think not therefore of any private Reſerves of Intereſt or Pleaſure, in Bar to my entire Poſſeſſion; for all the World cannot do thee greater Prejudice, than ſuch Self-love. This ſticks more cloſe, while other

other Things are loose, and at a Distance. And all Things fasten upon thee, only according as the Degree of thy own Love and Inclination for them gives Opportunity and Advantage. If your Mind and its Affections be pure, and sincere, and moderate, nothing shall have the Power to enslave you.

And what Pretence can you have for suffering them to be otherwise? For who would set his Love upon Things, which cannot be obtained without Difficulty, oftentimes not with it; or if they be, cannot be enjoy'd without Danger? Who would court Bonds and Captivity, and be fond of having that, which will obstruct his weightiest Concern, and rob him of his Liberty? Were these Considerations duly attended to, it must appear prodigious Folly, for any Man not to resign himself up entirely to Me; to waste his Strength with unprofitable Vexations, and labour in the Fire for Vanity, and create Troubles, which it is in his Power to avoid. Obey my Will then, and submit all to my Disposal, and then thou art out of the Reach of the World and its Temptations, But if Interest and private Respect still govern in thy Heart, all thy Application will be in vain. Thou runnest away from Troubles in one Place, to meet them in another; seeking Rest, but finding none, because thou always carriest thy Torment about thee. For even in thy most successful Attempts, there will be somewhat wanting to give thee compleat Satisfaction; and in thy most private Retirements thou wilt be dogged and haunted by some Crosses. The World and its Advantages can do thee no Service by being enjoyed, but by being slighted and despised. This is the Case, not of Riches only, but of Honour and Reputation too. For they also make themselves Wings, and fly away; and thou canst never be safe or happy, but by mortifying thy Ambition and Vain-glory.

How

How many People pleaſe themſelves with fond Imaginations of Eaſe and Leiſure to be good in a Country or a College-life? But Cloiſters and Deſerts ſignify nothing, without the Zeal and Diſpoſition of a Hermit. The Convenience of Place is very little; and all its boaſted Expectations vaniſh, except the Man be changed, as well as his Reſidence and Manner of Living. And this Change is not, cannot be effected, unleſs his Mind be fixed in Me alone, as the proper, the only Center of all its Affections and Deſires. The Liberty Men enjoy otherwiſe is very ſhort and unfaithful; for freſh Occaſions of Sin and Trouble will quickly offer themſelves; and then not only the old Inconveniences will return again, but new and greater, and ſuch as are peculiar to that new State of Life upon which they have enter'd; and thus their very Refuge becomes a freſh Temptation.

Chap. XXXII.

A Prayer for Purity of Heart, and heavenly Wiſdom.

Diſciple.] *Eſtabliſh me, Lord, with thy free Spirit,* that being ſtrengthened in the inner Man, I may purge my Soul from all vain Anxiety, and baniſh idle Fears, and get over the Diſcouragement and diſtracting Troubles of the World. Let not the wild and impatient Deſires of any thing here, tho' never ſo alluring and ſeemingly valuable, perplex my Thoughts, and draw me off from thee. Give me Grace to conſider myſelf, and all below, as Things full of Vanity, and of very ſhort Continuance. For ſuch indeed are all Things under the Sun, *Vexation of Spirit, and altogether lighter than Vanity*

Pſal. li. 11.

Vanity itself; and he who constantly looks upon them as such, is the truly, the only wise Man.

Impart to me then, O my God, I beseech thee, that heavenly Wisdom, which may dispose me to seek thy Kingdom and thy Righteousness; to sell all for this one Pearl of great Price; and to esteem myself rich in no Treasure but thee; to love and delight in thee alone; to take Satisfaction in all Things else in such Degrees, and in Subordination to such Purposes only, as thou hast appointed; and to receive every Dispensation of Providence, with such a Spirit and Temper as becomes my Duty, and may render it serviceable to the Ends for which thou sentest it. Grant me such Prudence and Conduct in all my Conversation, that I may decline and despise the Insinuations of Flatterers, and meekly receive the Contradiction and Reproaches of Gainsayers and Slanderers. For this is Wisdom indeed, when a Man is not carried about with every Blast of Air; but stops his Ears against the Syren's Charms; and resolutely proceeds in a straight steddy Course of Virtue, in Despight of all the Subtilty of those who labour to entice, or the Malice of them who would terrify and drive him from it. *Matth.* xiii.

Chap. XXXIII.

How a Christian ought to behave himself when Men speak Evil of him.

Christ.] My Son, if Detractors and Slanderers speak or think Ill of thee, let not this much disturb thee. The Provocation to Impatience and angry Resentments, which such ill Treatment usually ministers, will be much better employed against thy

thyſelf. Take then this Hint of improving thy Humility, by reflecting how many Things, which lie concealed from human Sight, thy own Mind is conſcious of; and the more their wicked Malice labours to leſſen thy Reputation, ſo much the leſs do thou appear in thy own Eſteem. If all be well within, and thy Heart right with Me, the impertinent Cenſures of buſy envious Men will make no very deep Impreſſion. And when theſe reach thy Ears, inſtead of recriminating and Indignation, it will be wiſely done to look up to Me, and not to be diſordered at any Judgment, which Men ſhall take upon them to pronounce concerning thee. For why ſhould thy Satisfaction be placed upon a Thing, which makes thee not one whit the better or the worſe? If they commend and cry thee up, thy real Merit is not the greater; and if they revile and run thee down, thy Innocence is not the leſs. Seek then true Honour and Satisfaction from Me, from Me alone; whoſe Sentence never ſwerves from Equity and Truth. And great ſhall thy Content and thy Quiet be, if thou neither ſolicitouſly court the Favour of Men, nor ſervilely fear their Cenſure and Diſpleaſure. For, after all the Complaints of outward Accidents, the true original Ground of all Diſquiet is within; for inordinate Affections and vain Fears, are the polluted Fountain from whence thoſe bitter Streams of Diſcontent, and perplexed Thoughts, and every Confuſion and Diſorder of a troubled Mind, flow.

CHAP. XXXIV.

How God ought to be addreſſed to in Time of Adverſity.

Diſciple.] *THE Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, bleſſed be the Name of the Lord*, Yea, bleſſed be thy Name for this very Calamity, with which thy Fatherly Wiſdom and Affection hath now thought fit to chaſtiſe and try me. I cannot flee from the Scourge of thy Rod; but I will fly to thee for Succour; and beg, that thou would'ſt aſſiſt me with thy Patience, and turn all my Sufferings to my Soul's Advantage. I am indeed in Trouble; and cannot but confeſs the preſent Diſorder, which this Misfortune gives me. But this is my own Infirmity; and *I know not what to pray for as I ought*. For what ſhall I ſay? *Lord, ſave me from this Hour*. No, deareſt Father, thou haſt not brought me to this Hour, had it not been for thy Glory, and my own Good. And therefore I will rather beg, that my Affliction may continue till thy gracious Purpoſes are accompliſhed in me; and, when thou ſeeſt me ſufficiently humbled, that then, and not before, thou would'ſt refreſh, and raiſe, and deliver me out of it. *Job.* i. 21. *Rom.* viii. 26. *John* xii.

For my Deliverance, I am duly ſenſible, can come from no other Hand; ſince I myſelf am weak, and poor, and blind, and know not what is beſt, or what to do. Grant me then, bleſſed Lord, a Reſcue in thy own due Time; and in the mean while ſtrengthen me with Patience, that by thy powerful Aid I may bear up againſt the ſharpeſt Tribulations without Deſpondency or Diſtraction. *Not my Will, Lord, but thine be done*, ſhall be the conſtant Language of my Heart; My ſinful Heart, which acknowledges thy

Mercy in the Midſt of Wrath, and ſadly reflects, that thou haſt puniſhed me much leſs than my Offences deſerve. O that this humble Senſe of my own Guilt may work in me ſuch quiet and contented Submiſſion to thy Will, that I may neither unduly decline nor unthankfully murmur at the Weight or the Length of my Sufferings, till thou ſee fit to compoſe this Storm, and reſtore to me the Comforts of thy Favour and indulgent Providence!

For, if the Tempeſt ſtill rage, this is not the Effect of Want of Power in thee to quiet it; but becauſe a perfect Calm is not yet ſeaſonable for me. Thy mighty Hand can lay it in a Moment: Thou canſt abate its Fury, or thou canſt protect and ſupport me under its Violence and Extremity. I know thou canſt; for thou haſt taught me, by my own Experience, and the Remembrance of thy former Mercies will not ſuffer me to doubt the Efficacy of thy Power. But, in Proportion as my Grief and Burthen is greater, ſo much the ſweeter and more refreſhing let thy healing Virtue, and Spiritual Conſolations be; and let me feel thy gracious Promiſe, *That thou will not ſuffer thy Servants to be tempted above that they are able, but wilt with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that they may be able to bear it.*

1 *Cor.* x. 12.

Chap. XXXV.

How the Divine Aſſiſtances ſhould be ſought, and depended upon.

Chriſt.] I Am that Lord, my Son, who is the Stronghold of afflicted Men in the Time of Trouble, and in whom thou doſt well to take Sanctuary, in all thy Diſtreſſes. But, if thy Comforts make not haſte, thou doſt thyſelf frequently obſtruct

Nahum. i.

obstruct and disappoint thy own Expectations, by deferring thy Prayers, and by Slowness to ask Relief. For Men generally try all other Comforts and Remedies first, and reserve Me for their last Refuge, in Times of such Extremity, when nothing will do them Service; and then my Honour is concerned, not only to defeat those Human Contrivances, in which they vainly trusted, but to defer my own Succours; and, by making them smart for their impious Neglect, compel them to acknowledge, that I am the Deliverer of them that trust in Me; and that, without me no Succours are strong, no Counsels wise, no Remedies successful. And, if their Sufferings find some present Abatement, this only skins the Wound, but is no perfect Cure; and the Pain it asswages will return again with doubled Anguish and Rage. For I alone, who gave the Stroke, can heal it; and, as there is no Evil which the Lord hath not done, so neither is there any Deliverance which the Lord hath not wrought.

But, now that thy Applications are come up into my Ears, and thou hast cast thyself upon my Mercy, I will revive thy drooping Spirits, and thou shalt, after this dark dismal Storm, rejoice again in the Light of my Countenance. For I am ready, not only to restore thy former Happiness, but also to recompense thy past Pains and Patience, by plentiful Additions of more and greater Blessings. And let not any Adversity, tho' ever so grievous, prevail upon thy Frailty to distrust my doing so. For, Can there be any Thing too hard for Me? Or am I like deceitful Men, who sooth their Dependants up with Promises, which they never design to perform? Have I at any Time broken my Word? Where then is thy Faith, where thy Courage? Bear bravely up, and discharge thy Duty. For, if thou fail not to qualify thyself for receiving them, Grace and Consolation shall certainly approach in due Time. *If*

Heb. ii. *the Lord tarry, yet wait for him*, for he *will surely come* and heal thee. The Load, which now oppreſſes thee, is only laid there, to try thy Strength and Virtues; nor would it weigh thee down ſo low, if thy own Folly did not make it heavier, by heaping on anxious Cares for the future, upon thy preſent Sufferings. But this is to conſpire againſt thyſelf, and turn thy own Tormentor. *Matt.* vi. 34. *Sufficient to each day is the Evil thereof*; without charging it with additional Troubles, which no way belong to it. Theſe are indeed impertinent and ſenſeleſs at all Times; for, how abſurd is it to exalt or deject one's ſelf, by Hopes, and Fears, and fond Repreſentations of diſtant Good and Evil, which have not any Being in Nature, and probably may never be at all? Diſmiſs theſe empty, but painful Follies; the mere Creatures of thy own ſick Fancy. For ſuch Deluſions are a great Reproach upon Reaſon, and a greater yet upon Chriſtianity; when thy mean timorous Soul is mocked by ſuch airy Phantoms, and ſo very eaſily led Captive by the Enemy's Suggeſtions. And ſuch are theſe deſponding or ſanguine Thoughts of what will be hereafter. Whether it be or not, He matters not; for his Buſineſs is to deceive and undo Men. And true or falſe Hopes and Terrors contribute equally to this Deſign. The Love of preſent Good, and Dread of approaching Evils, are Inſtruments of Ruin, employed by him, with wonderful Addreſs; and ſo Ruin be but the Conſequence, the Methods and Management of it are altogether indifferent to him.

Do not therefore ſuffer Fear to deject thee, but ſtill maintain thy Chriſtian Courage, and repoſe thy Confidence in my Mercy. I am often ready at hand, when thou ſuppoſeſt me at a Diſtance; and, at thoſe Times, when all is given for gone, Things are ſo far from deſperate, that proſperous Events and moſt ſurprizing Com-

Comforts are breaking in upon thee, like a glorious Sun from an aſtoniſhing Eclipſe. 'Tis Raſhneſs therefore to conclude Affairs in a loſt Condition, becauſe ſome Croſſes have baulked your Expectations: Nor can either thy own Reſentment of Misfortunes within, or the Violence of any Calamity without, give thee ſufficient Grounds, from the terrible Face thy preſent Circumſtances wear, to pronounce, That all Hope of Eſcape and better Days are paſt. Nay, which is the moſt ſenſible and moſt deplorable Caſe of any, if at the ſame time that I ſcourge thee with outward Calamities, thou feel the inward Supports of my Grace withdrawn, which ſhould enable thee to bear the Rod; yet even ſo, think not thyſelf forſaken, or that I have utterly caſt thee from my Preſence. The Way to Heaven is ſet with Briars and Thorns; and they, who arrive at the Kingdom, travel over craggy Rocks and comfortleſs Deſerts: And more it is for their Advantage to have their Virtue awakened, and brightened, and brought to the Teſt, by the Smart of Adverſity; than that all Things ſhould go ſmoothly on, without any Manner of Let or Moleſtation.

The Heart of a Man is deceitful, who can know it? Thy very ſelf art often under very dangerous Miſtakes about thy own Condition. Thou art ignorant what thou art, and much more ignorant what is fit for thee. But I, who have a perfect Underſtanding of both, ſee plainly, that it is proper and beneficial ſometimes to be left to thyſelf; that thus ſtruggling to ſo little Purpoſe with the Calamities that bear thee down, thou may'ſt be brought to a juſt and humble Senſe of thy Infirmities; that this Senſe may check thy Vanity, and ſhew, that all thy Attempts which prove ſucceſsful, are owing entirely to another Hand; and thou art in truth nothing leſs than that mighty Man thou art apt to take thyſelf for. This makes my depriving thee of thy uſual Comforts convenient; but ſtill 'tis in my Power

to reſtore and augment them to thee, when I ſee that convenient too.

Nor think me hard and unjuſt in theſe Diſpenſations; for who ſhall forbid me to do what I will with my own? I gave thee what thou couldſt not claim; and I take away what thou haſt no Right to keep. For *every good and perfect Gift is mine*, and not a Debt but a Favour. If then Affliction comes, remember 'tis of my ſending; and I, who laid the Croſs, can both remove and recompenſe it: *I kill and make alive, I bring down to the Grave, and raiſe up from it:* And, in the Inſtant that I lay my Thunder by, and ſmile again, thy Heavineſs ſhall be changed into Joy unſpeakable.

James i.17.

1 *Sam.* ii.

In all my Dealings I am juſt, in all am wiſe, and good; and deſerve not only thy Admiration, but even thy Thanks and Praiſe. Could'ſt thou but rightly comprehend my Methods, and the ſecret Reaſons of them, thou would'ſt drink up the bitter Portion with Joy; with Joy upon this very Conſideration, that I do not ſpare thee to thy Hurt, but ſend Afflictions in pure Kindneſs to thee, when I foreſee they will be for thy Advantage. Obſerve the Tenure of my gracious Promiſe to my beſt beloved Diſciples: *As my Father loved me, even ſo have I loved you.* But both my Father's Love to Me, and Mine to Them, was expreſs'd, not by falſe and tranſitory Joys, but by ſharp and long Conflicts; by being called, not to Honours, but to Contumelies and Diſgrace; not by indulging them in Eaſe and Sloth, but by inuring them to Trials and Difficulties; by calling them, not to Reſt and Peace, but to bring forth noble and generous Fruit with Patience. Remember well theſe Words, my Son, and then thou canſt not think much to *drink of the Cup that I drank of* ſo deeply, and to be *baptized with the Baptiſm that I was baptized with.* Thou canſt not then deſpair, or think, that God,

John xvi.

God, in afflicting thee, hath abandoned all Care and Concern for thy Benefit; since even that tender, that unparallel'd, that unconceivable Affection, with which he loved his own dear Son, hindered not his making that *very Captain of thy Salvation perfect thro' Sufferings*. And what art Thou? What is the best of Men in Comparison of Him? What are thy Agonies and Trials, the very worst of thine, in Comparison of His? *Heb.* ii.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Of seeking God alone.

Disciple.] THY Mercy, Lord, is great, which hath thus far assisted me; but still, I feel I want a larger Portion of thy Grace, which may conduct me to such a State of Perfection, as may secure and set me at Liberty, from all the Obstructions which the Creatures lay in my Way. For, so long as I retain an Affection or Concern for any Thing in this World, I find my Soul check'd and restrained in her Mountings to Thee and Heaven. How often do I make the Prophet's Wish my own, *O that I had Wings like a Dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest? Lo then would I get me away far off*, and remain at a Distance from the World. Now what is more at ease, more abstracted from the World, than a true single-hearted Honesty? What can boast of Freedom equal to his, who covets nothing upon Earth? All created Beings should indeed be passed over, and left behind in this Flight; and a Man must make a Stretch even beyond himself, and abandon his own natural Inclinations and Defects, in order to get a distinct View of the Creator, and those Perfections in him, to which *Psal.* iv.

no Creature bears any Reſemblance. Now this is the very Reaſon, why ſo few employ their Thoughts in Heavenly Contemplations with any ſenſible Delight; becauſe, when they attempt it, they do it unſkilfully. For they bring thoſe worldly Affections along with them, that damp and diſguſt them in the Undertaking.

It is not, I confeſs, an eaſy Matter, nay, 'tis not poſſible to Fleſh and Blood, by its own Strength, thus to purge the Affections. Nothing leſs than a liberal and very powerful Inſpiration of Divine Grace can thus exalt the Mind, and as it were carry the Man out of himſelf. But, till ſuch Exaltation of the Soul hath diſengaged one from all temporal Intereſts, and fix'd down his Deſires to that One Object worthy of them, God himſelf; all his Knowledge and imagined Excellencies are very little Worth. For, whatever falſe Notions of Honour and Greatneſs Men may delude themſelves with, yet ſtill all they have poor and little Souls, and dote upon that which ought to be diſdained, who allow any Thing, beſides the Infinate and Eternal God, a very honourable Place in their Affections and Eſteem. For All which is not God, is Vanity and Nothing, and ought to be nothing regarded. How vaſt a Difference is there between the Wiſdom of a mortified pious Man, enlightened from above; and the pompous Learning of a profound and ſtudious Divine? That Knowledge, which deſcends from above, ſpeaks its heavenly Original, by marvellous and noble Effects; and works a greater Change in the Man, a greater Improvement in profitable Knowledge, than all that Comprehenſion, which the beſt Capacities, and the moſt indefatigable Induſtry, can ever attain to.

We often hear very glorious Characters of Divine Contemplation, and the wonderful Delights and Tranſports attending it; and Theſe a great many appear very

very fond of. But when they have no Regard to the neceſſary Preparations for it, their Minds are full of ſenſible Ideas, and poſſeſſed with the Things of this preſent World; and the ſubduing and mortifying their Deſires and Paſſions is a Matter they take no Care about. And while their Affairs continue in this Poſture, they are in no Degree qualified for thoſe Exerciſes of the Mind. Methinks it is a moſt unaccountable Folly, and argues, that Men forget what Spirit they are of when they call themſelves Chriſtians, *i. e.* ſpiritual Perſons, that have ſolemnly renounced the World, with its Vanities, and the Fleſh, with its ſinful Luſts; who profeſs to believe and to ſeek Happineſs in a future State, and to place that Happineſs in the Perfection of their Souls; and yet, in Reproach and Contradiction of thoſe Profeſſions, ſuffer Body and Senſe to run away with them; lay out themſelves entirely upon periſhing and paltry Advantages, while the ſubſtantial and everlaſting are wretchedly neglected, and their Souls ſo perfectly forgotten, that they ſcarce afford one ſerious Thought to their moſt important Concerns. Or, if at any Time they ſet themſelves to think, ſome Trifle preſently interrupts and draws them off from any profitable Recollections. Nay, they themſelves fly out, and are glad to be diverted from a ſevere Examination into their own State; which is ſure, if diligently purſued, to preſent them with Objects of Shame and Sorrow, ſuch as will wound their Sight, and ſoon make them weary of this neceſſary Work. Thus we never trouble ourſelves to obſerve which Way our Inclinations are diſpoſed, or whither they tend; nor do we ſeriouſly bewail the abominable Impurity of our Hearts, though there be nothing but Impurity there. *The way of all Fleſh is corrupt upon the Earth*, and that univerſal Corruption, ſays the Scripture, brought a Flood to deſtroy Mankind and every Creature. But whence, do we think, proceeds

Gen. vi.

proceeds such Corruption of Manners? From the corrupt Affections of Men, no doubt. For, if this Fountain be not sweet, the Action, which is but a Stream and Emanation from it, must of Necessity be flat and bitter. For a pure Heart is the Ground-work of a holy Life; and as naturally springs from it, as the Fruit from the Tree.

And herein we are much to blame, that so little Regard is had to the Dispositions of the Heart; without which no true Judgment can ever be made, either of ourselves or others. But this, which is in Truth of greatest Consequence, the very Point upon which a Man's whole Character turns, seems to be laid aside, as a Thing too nice and speculative to be very curious in. We fix our Eyes upon the outward Action, consider what, or how much a Man hath done; but with what Sincerity, with what Zeal, with what honest Intention he did it, or whether with none of all these Qualifications, we trouble not ourselves to enquire. So, again, for the Estimate we make of Persons, they are all foreign from the true and proper Foundation of Merit and Respect. The Riches, Valour, Beauty, Judgment, Wit, Eloquence, a good Stile, or a sweet Voice, or a Knack of Management in Town or Country-Business, his Preferments, or his Profession, these we immediately take care to be informed of, and proportion our Value and Respects accordingly. But a Man's Humility and Poverty of Spirit, his Meekness and Patience, his Devotion and Piety, these are seldom mentioned in the Character, or recommended as Motives to induce Regard. Thus Nature and Grace have their different Prospects and Affections. The *former* looks at the Out-side of a Man, and rates him according to Things that are not his; the *latter* places all within, and sets not at all by external Ornaments and Advantages. The former builds upon a false

false Bottom, seeks herself what she values in others, and is oftentimes deceived and disappointed; the *latter* reposes her whole Hope and Love in God, and is never mistaken, never deluded by false Expectations.

Chap. XXXVII.

Of Self-denial.

Christ.] THOU canst not, Son, be entirely free, till thou hast attained to such a Mastery, as entirely to subdue and deny thyself. For covetous Persons, and Lovers of themselves, the lustful, and busy, and unsettled Men, the Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God, are all Slaves, vile and unprofitable Slaves, condemned to fruitless, endless Toil, seeking what they cannot find, and contriving what they cannot compass; or if they could, what they cannot long enjoy. For every thing which is not of God, is soon brought to nought. Observe this short, but certain Aphorism, *Forsake all, and thou shall find all.* Let go Desire, and thou shalt lay hold on Peace. Consider this Rule diligently, and transcribe it into thy Practice, for Practice will explain and prove it to thee.

Disciple.] This, Lord, is not the Work of a single Day, a Maxim not fitted for weak Capacities, but such as in one short Sentence contains the utmost Perfection of a pious and resigned Christian.

Christ.] And why, my Son, should that Perfection affright or discourage thee? Call up thy Zeal, aspire to true Greatness of Soul; and the nobler the Virtue is, the more eager and generous Resolution do thou express of attaining to it. Oh! that thou wert of that

happy Diſpoſition, which utterly diſcards all narrow and ſelfiſh Conſiderations, and ſubmits itſelf entirely to the Obedience of my Commands, and the Diſpoſals of my Providence! So ſhould thy Perſon and thy Behaviour be acceptable to thy God; ſo ſhould'ſt thou enjoy great Satisfaction, and Peace in thy own Breaſt. Alas! there are ſtill many things which muſt be abandoned; many, which till thou haſt ſacrificed to me, the Happineſs thou aimeſt at can never be obtained. Buy therefore of me the pure refined Gold, of a heavenly and refined Diſpoſition, for that ſhall make the rich above all the Treaſures of this World. Caſt off thee Wiſdom of this Generation, and do not ſooth thyſelf with their fooliſh Imaginations, for they purſue Shadows, and take delight in Vanity and Nothing. Remember I have told thee, that the Things which are lightly eſteemed, muſt be purchaſed at the Expence of thoſe which this World eſteems moſt precious. For what is more deſpiſed and mean in common Reputation, what more neglected and forgotten, than that true heavenly Wiſdom, which renounces all Merit of its own, and is content to be diſregarded by the Men of this World? This mortified and humble State of Mind is what indeed ſome people profeſs, and in Words commend; but their Practice plainly condemns it, and gives the Lie to all their diſſembled Praiſes.

Matth. xiii. And yet this Wiſdom, poor and deſpicable as it appears to common Eyes, is that Pearl of great Price, for which all other Poſſeſſions are wiſely given in exchange; that hidden Treaſure which is always like to continue hid, ſince it lies low, and few either do, or care to find it.

CHAP.

Chap. XXXVIII.

The Changeableneſs of our Temper, and how to fix it.

Chriſt.] DO not, my Son, depend upon any preſent Diſpoſition of Mind, with which thou feeleſt thyſelf affected; for this is fickle, and of ſhort Duration. Variety and Change is what Men muſt be ſubject to, ſo long as they carry the Frailties of Fleſh and Blood about them; and all their Endeavours cannot ſo fix their Hearts, as to keep them conſtantly the ſame. Sometimes they find themſelves diſpoſed to Mirth, ſometimes to Melancholy; now they are even and ſerene, by and by all over Diſorder and Confuſion; this Hour fervent and devout, the next lukewarm and cold; ſtudious and induſtrious to-day, ſlothful and unfit for Buſineſs to-morrow; ſerious and grave, and thoughtful now; and anon again gay and trifling, light as Air. But the truly wiſe Man, who is acted by the Spirit of God, gets above this changeable Region of the lower World. He ſuffers not himſelf to be carried about with every Blaſt and Impulſe of Inconſtancy, but ſettles upon the Baſis of the one excellent End, which is always firſt and moſt in his Thoughts, the Port to which he makes, and the Compaſs by which he ſteers all his Deſigns and Actions. For by this Method it is very poſſible for a Man to continue unſhaken and unmoved, by any Guſt of Inclination from within, or Accident from without. The natural Changeableneſs of human Affections, being yet more improved by Mens own voluntary Uncertainty, and propoſing no conſtant End or Rule to themſelves. Now that Intention which fixes upon God as its only End, will keep Men ſteddy in their Purpoſes, and deliver them from being the Jeſt and Scorn of Fortune. And this in Scrip-

Scripture is ſtiled *a ſingle Eye*, becauſe it ever looks and aims but at one Object.

The more intent then that Eye is in this Proſpect, the leſs diverted from its Mark, the firmer and more conſiſtent Men are with themſelves; and the leſs Impreſſion does any Change of Wind or Weather make upon ſuch diligent and wiſe Pilots. But ſtill Infirmity prevails in moſt; and if ſome Pleaſure or Profit come betwixt, they retain ſo much Tenderneſs for themſelves, and their temporal Advantages, as to be diverted from the ſame vigorous Purſuit of their firſt Prize, and allow this freſh one a Part at leaſt of their Endeavours and Deſires. They love God, but they would love the World too; and in this State of divided Affections ſomewhat reſemble the *Jews*; who, as the Evangeliſt obſerves, came to viſit *Martha* and *Mary* at *Bethany*, not only that they might ſee and hear Jeſus, but that they might ſatisfy their Curioſity in gazing upon *Lazarus*, whom he had raiſed from the Dead. It muſt therefore be your great Care and Buſineſs to compoſe this Diſtraction of Thought, to fix your Heart to one Purpoſe, to ſeek one Good, one End, ſo zealouſly, that nothing elſe may come into Competition or Partnerſhip with it; to look upon every thing which diverts you from, or cools you in this Purſuit, with an Eye of Contempt; and conſtantly to keep your Hope, and Deſire, and Love (which are the Spring and Guide of all your Actions) upon Me alone.

John xii. 9.

CHAP.

Chap. XXXIX.

The Happiness of them who love God.

Disciple.] In having God, I have all Things. *For whom can I have in Heaven but thee? and what is there upon Earth that I can desire in comparison of thee?* Psal. lxxiii. Oh sweet and comfortable Words! But this is a Sweetness which none can taste, but they who love the Word of God, and not *the World, neither the things that be in the World.* 1 John ii. 15. My God to me is All; I need add no more. The Men of purified Understandings find this enough, and they of purified and heavenly Affections cannot repeat it too often. When thou art present, Affliction and Death are pleasant; for in thy Favour is Life and Joy. When thou art absent, Life itself is a Burthen; for thy Displeasure is worse than Death. Thou makest a merry Heart, a chearful Countenance; in thee is abundance of Peace, and a continual Feast. Thou givest me right Notions of all Events, and rendereſt every Accident a Matter of Joy and Praise to me. Without thee Prosperity itself is nauseous, and I loath my very Mercies. For nothing here below can please our Palate, unless thy Favour and Wisdom give it a grateful Relish. To him that feeds delightfully on thee, every bitter Morsel is sweet; but they who want or slight that heavenly Entertainment, find the most delicious Dainties harsh and bitter.

They who are wise for the World and the Flesh, are most defective in the true and heavenly Wisdom. The carnal Wisdom ends in Guilt and Death, and the worldly Wisdom pursues Vanity and empty Pomp. But they who are wise indeed, conform themselves to thy Example, by a Contempt of all earthly Greatness and

and a vigorous Mortification of the ſenſual Appetites and Paſſions; they diſdain the Shadow, and lay hold on the Subſtance; paſs from Falſhood to Truth, and from Body to Spirit. Theſe are the Men who love and delight in God, and find no Satisfaction in the Creatures, farther than as they promote the Honour and ſerve the Purpoſes of the great Creator. The Joys they miniſter are ſubordinate and limited; not inherent and natural, but by Reflection only; and every Thing is eſteemed in Proportion as it tends to its Maker's Uſe and Praiſe. So very unlike, ſo infinitely different is the Pleaſure we feel from the Creator and the Creature; from the boundleſs Ocean of Eternity and the narrow Tract of Time; from the original ſelf-exiſtent Light, and thoſe faint Beams ſhot down on Things here below.

Shine then, O Light everlaſting, in Compariſon whereof all created Lights are but a leſs Degree of Darkneſs. Convey thyſelf into my benighted Soul, purge and diſpel the Clouds of Error there, purify my polluted Affections, chear my Sadneſs, enliven my ſtupid Mind and all its Faculties, that I may rejoice and triumph, and baſk in thy bright Beams. O! when will that happy, that long wiſh'd for Hour approach, when I ſhall be filled with thy Luſtre, and ſatisfied with thy Preſence, and my God be my all in all? For, ſure I am, till that bleſſed Time, my Joys muſt be imperfect. I feel, alas! I feel and lament in myſelf, ſome Remains of the Old Man ſtill. Scourged he is, but not entirely crucified; wounded and bruiſed, but not quite dead. My Fleſh, in Deſpight of all my painful Labours, continues to Luſt againſt the Spirit, and a domeſtick War diſtracts and breaks the Peace and good Government of my Mind. This cannot exerciſe its juſt Dominion without perpetual Broils and tumultuous Inſurrections. But, O thou, *who ruleſt the raging of the Sea, and ſtilleſt the Waves*

Pſal. lxvi.

Waves thereof when they arise, come speedily to my Assistance, and quell this Storm. *Scatter my Enemies that delight in Blood, and beat them down, O Lord, my Defence.* Exert thy mighty Power, and get thee Honour by this Conquest. For thou, O Lord my God, art my only Hope and Helper; O save, or I perish.

Chap. XL.

This Life a State of continual Temptation.

Christ.] DO not suppose, my Son, that in this World thou ever canst be in a Condition of absolute Safety. Dangers and Enemies await thee every where. Violence and Stratagems are perpetually employed for thy Ruin; and therefore the Weapons of thy spiritual Warfare must not be laid aside; for useful they are, and always necessary, during this State of Mortality. Cover thyself then with the Shield of Wisdom and Faith; for if thou expose thy Person without this Defence, the fiery Darts of the Wicked will quickly gaul and wound thee. And if Dexterity and Diligence in the Use of thy Arms be not animated by a Mind fixed entirely upon Me, and a vigorous Resolution of enduring the worst that can happen for my sake, the Engagement will be found too hot, and that Crown of the Blessed, which is the Reward of Perseverance, can never belong to thee. Call up thy Courage then, and exert thy utmost Strength as Occasions of Combat shall offer. For *to him that overcometh will I give the hidden Manna*; *Rev.* ii. but Misery and Destruction as the Portion of faint-hearted and feeble Soldiers.

If then these are the Conditions of thy Obedience and Reward, think how absurd it is for them who indulge their Ease here, to expect Peace and Happiness hereafter. In one of the two States Enduring must be thy Lot; and therefore tough Patience, and not soft Repose, is what thou shouldst labour for at present. For Rest and undisturbed Content have now no Place on Earth, nor can the greatest Affluence of worldly Good procure them; but their Dwelling is in Heaven only, and they are peculiar to the Love and Fruition of God alone. In Obedience to his Will, you should contentedly undergo Labour and Toil, Trials and Troubles, Distress and Anguish of Heart, Poverty and Want, Infirmities and Diseases, Injuries and Affronts, Scandal and Reproach, Disparagement and Disgrace, Punishment and Torture. These whet and brighten a Christian's Virtue, exercise and distinguish him. These Thorns are woven into Wreaths of Glory; and to such faithful Servants I repay for their short Hardship an endless Recompence; and for the Shame, which is presently forgotten, Laurels that never fade, Crowns always bright, and Honours firm and immortal as my own.

These are the Difficulties of the present State, which Men are to be upon their Guard against from without. But alas! they must not hope always to enjoy Peace and Satisfaction within. No, even the Saints of old, whose purer Innocence and eminent Virtues might better entitle them to this Tranquility, yet often found occasion to complain, that *their Heart was disquieted, their Spirit desolate, and an horrible Dread overwhelmed them.* Doubts and Scruples, Temptations and Fears, and cutting Perplexities of Heart, are frequently the Lot of the most excellent Persons. But in all these Straits the Good behave themselves with Meekness and Patience, reposing their Confidence in God, and humbly distrusting themselves,

Ps. lv. cxliii.

selves, but supported with the Hopes of divine Grace and Favour, to comfort and assist them; and with the Consideration, that the *Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in them.* This was the Case of those glorious Saints, who are thy Patterns. And what Pretence canst thou have to hope for that Joy in present, which they waited long for, and purchased at the Expence of sore Pains, and many Tears, and great Difficulties; and thought themselves well paid even thus? Wait then thy Master's Leisure, quit thyself manfully, banish Impatience and Distrust, persevere in Faith and good Works; grudge not to lay out Person, Life, All, for the Service and Glory of God; and doubt not but I will one Day abundantly reward, and in the mean time I will stand by thee to sustain and deliver thee in every Danger and Calamity.

Chap. XLI.

Of despising the vain Censures of Men.

Christ.] My Son, repose thy Soul upon God, cast all thy Care there, and let it be thy great, thy only Concern, to approve thyself to Him. When this is done, a Man should not much regard what the World thinks of him, nor fear the Censures of others, while his own Conscience bears Testimony to his Piety and Innocence. To be ill thought of, is sometimes for thy good; it conforms thee to the Image of thy Saviour; and if thy Soul, like his, be meek and humble; if thou seek not thy own Glory, but his that sent thee, the Affliction will not be very grievous to be borne. The Opinions of Men are as many and as different as their Persons;

the greateſt Diligence and moſt prudent Conduct can never pleaſe them all. And therefore even St. *Paul* himſelf, than whom none ever laboured more to recommend his Actions to the good Acceptance of the World, *he who became all things to all Men*, yet found it neceſſary to appeal to a higher Court, and declared it *a ſmall thing with him to be judged of Man's Judgment.* He did his utmoſt to promote the Intereſt and Salvation of others: but even the utmoſt he could do, was not ſufficient to ſcreen him from the wrongful Cenſures and perverſe Miſconſtructions of Men. And therefore he removed his Cauſe, and referred the whole Matter to that God who knew his Integrity; and defended himſelf againſt the Calumnies and Reproaches of licentious Tongues with great Humility and invincible Patience. Sometimes he heard and paſſed their Slanders by in Silence; at other times he vindicated his own Innocence, and reproved the unreaſonable Malice of his Accuſers; not ſo much in Tenderneſs to his own Honour, as to prevent an Offence which might be taken from his forbearing to do ſo; and leſt the Weak and Ignorant ſhould conclude, that too obſtinate a Silence was an Argument of his Guilt.

1 *Cor.* xi.

1 *Cor.* iv.

But what is there ſo terrible in the Condemnation of Man? For what indeed is Man? He lives and flouriſhes to-day, but to-morrow he is gone, and his Place ſhall know him no more. Fear God then, and his Judgment, for this is omniſcient and everlaſting; and the more thou feareſt Him, the leſs thou wilt be afraid of any but him, Conſider well what Hurt can come to thee by injurious and reproachful Treatment. Alas! they who accuſe and blacken thee wrongfully, are much the greateſt Sufferers by their own Malice and Injuſtice. Their Slander and Detraction can have no Influence, can make no Impreſſion upon

upon the righteous Judge above. None to thy Prejudice, but a sad and fatal one to their own. For they cannot escape his Judgment, who hath declared, that they who *judge shall be judged*; *that they shall have Judgment without Mercy, who shew no Mercy*; *and that the same Measure they mete to others, he will measure to them again.* Keep God then always in thy Mind, and let go Quarrel and Contention, nor embroil thyself in Troubles and Differences, by being over solicitous in thy own Defence. If thou at present seem to be oppressed with Disgrace and ill Reports, which thou hast not deserved, bear thy Burthen contentedly. Blemish not thy Innocence by too deep Resentment; nor take off from the Brightness of thy Crown, by Anger and Impatience, and Eagerness to right thyself. Reflect on Me, who once endured such Contradiction of obstinate and implacable Sinners, and am now set down at the Right-hand of the Throne of God. Look up to Heaven, and remember, there is One who can make thy Innocence as clear as the Light, and thy Righteousness shine like the Sun at Noon-day. One, who will consider, not only thy Infamy and Wrong, but thy manner of bearing it; and the more meek, more injur'd thou hast been, the kinder and more bountiful Rewarder thou shalt be sure to find me.

Matth. vii. 1 *Pet.* iv.

Heb. xii.

Psal. xxxvii.

Chap. XLII.

A Chriſtian muſt devote himſelf entirely to God, before he can be happy.

Chriſt.] *LOSE thy Life, and thou ſhalt find it.* Forſake thyſelf, and thou ſhalt poſſeſs me. Eſteem and have nothing, and thou ſhalt enjoy all Things. For I will recompenſe thee with greater Treaſures, and infinitely increaſe thy Store, when thou haſt made over into my Hands all that thou haſt and art.

Diſciple.] How often, Lord, muſt I repeat this Gift; and what are the Inſtances wherein I muſt forſake myſelf?

Chriſt.] All Times, my Son, are ſeaſonable; and every Action, every Accident of thy Life, furniſhes a freſh and proper Occaſion for doing it. I can admit of no Reſerves, but expect thee ſtripp'd of all, and nothing left which I have not a Title to. For how canſt thou be mine, and I thine, except thy own Will be renounced in every Thing, and no Property or Claim any longer remaining unconveyed over? The ſooner thou executeſt this Deed, the better will it be for thee; and the more full and expreſs, the more frank and ſincere thou art in it, the more favourable will be my Acceptance, and the more valuable Conſideration ſhalt thou receive. Some indeed there are who pretend to give themſelves, but the Conveyance is ſo clogged with Proviſo's and Limitations, that the Title they make is worth nothing. They truſt themſelves to God by halves, and for making the beſt of the World at the ſame time. Others again do this without Exceptions; but then in Difficulties and Temptations they repent of their Bargain, and revoke the Grant. Theſe Men make no conſiderable Improvement in Virtue, nor do they taſte the Sweets of Piety, which conſiſt

conſiſt in a Mind at large from the World, and the Friendſhip and familiar Converſation of God. But ſuch ſpiritual Advantages cannot, in the Nature of the Thing, be imparted to any whoſe Affections are not entirely agreeable, and inſeparably united to mine. And this requires the total Reſignation of a Man's ſelf, and the daily Offering of his whole *Spirit, and Soul, and Body, a holy, lively, and reaſonable Sacrifice unto me.* I have often ſaid it, and now repeat it once more, that *he who would receive All, muſt, in Exchange, give All.* Do not then expect, or call in any Thing again, but give freely and chearfully, and depend ſolely upon me without Doubts or Demurs. Me thou ſhalt have in Return, and with me perfect Freedom and ſaving Knowledge. Prevail with thyſelf to give up all, without Intent or Power of Revocation; and pray earneſtly that thou may'ſt gladly follow Chriſt in all his Sufferings and loweſt State; that thou may'ſt renounce all Property, and throw thyſelf naked into his Embraces; that thou may'ſt die to the World at preſent, and by ſo doing live to me for ever. When this is done, all vain Imaginations will be baniſhed; Luſt will diſturb thee no more, nor Paſſions ruffle, nor anxious Cares perplex thee; exceſſive Fears will run and hide their Head; inordinate Deſires will ſicken and die: Sorrow and Diſquiet find no Place: and if Temptations try, yet can they not moleſt thee.

Chap. XLIII.

How to govern one's self in the Affairs of the World.

Christ.] BE sure, my Son, to take good Heed that Business and Care never get within thee; but whatever Constraint they may lay upon thy Actions and outward Attendance, yet keep thy Mind always at its own Disposal. Do Business, but be not a Slave to it; and remember, thy Prerogative is to govern, and not to serve the Things of the World. Thou art a *Hebrew*, of the spiritual Seed of *Abraham*; assert thy native Liberty. But why do I call thee a free-born Son of *Abraham?* thou art a great deal more, *translated out of Bondage into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God, Partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* Such Birth, such a Condition, should raise and enoble thy Soul, trample upon the present, and grasp at nothing less than Eternity, Cast only now and then a disdainful Glance upon this World, as a Thing by the By; but keep thy Eye immoveable, and directly fixed upon Heaven, as thy sure Prospect, thy main Concern. It will not become thy Quality to dwell upon Trifles, or subject thyself to Things temporal. These thou must make bend to thy Pleasure, submit and serve thy Occasions. For so their great Creator intended they should, who is the Author and Lover of Order, and would have every Work of his contain'd within its proper Post and Station.

Coloss. i.

If thou, at any Time, art entangled in Difficulties rely not upon human Prudence, nor trust the false Representations, with which thy Senses and worldly Affections, or the mistaken Judgment of others so disposed, would impose upon thee. But remember

Moſes, and go with him into the Tabernacle to aſk Counſel of thy God. There thou ſhalt often meet a proper Anſwer, have many Thoughts ſeaſonably ſuggeſted to thy Mind, and return wiſer, both for this and the next World, than thou wert before. For *Moſes* always took this Courſe in doubtful Caſes and important Exigencies: He made Prayer his Weapon and Refuge, by it he vanquiſhed many Dangers, the Malice of Enemies and wicked Men eſcaped, detected their Deviliſh Deſigns, and retorted the Miſchiefs they intended, back upon their own Heads. Now what that Tabernacle was to Him, thy Cloſet and thy Conſcience are to Thee. Neglect not then by any Means to conſult this Oracle, and implore the Directions and Aſſiſtances of Divine Grace. For the ill Conſequences of acting upon thy own Head without theſe Precautions, are intimated to thee, by that Inſtance of *Joſhua* and the *Iſraelites:* Who are expreſly ſaid to have been deceived by the *Gibeonites*, to their great Prejudice; becauſe they gave too eaſy Credit to their flattering fair Pretences, and engaged in a League without firſt enquiring of the Lord.

Exod. xxxiii.

Joſh. ix.

Chap. XLIV.

Againſt too great Eagerneſs in Buſineſs.

Chriſt.] My Son, commit thy Affairs to my Care, and I will in due Time bleſs them with a proper, and profitable Iſſue. But wait with Patience till that appointed Time of mine, and do not anticipate the Methods of my Providence; for I know how to convert every Delay to thy Advantage.

Diſ-

Disciple.] Lord, I must willingly commit my Concerns to thy Management; for all that little I am capable of is very insignificant. And therefore I cannot but wish, that this Sense, to how little Purpose all my own Pains and Contrivances are, might free me from anxious Thoughts concerning future Contingencies, and dispose me calmly to acquiesce in thy wise and good Pleasure.

Christ.] Alas! my Son, eager and greedy Men covet they know not what. An Object at a Distance engages their Desires, while they see only the fair and glittering Side; but, upon closer and more distinct View, Enjoyment undeceives them, and they grow sick, even of their own Desires. For their own Desires are various and mutable, and ever veering about to some fresh Object. It is therefore of some Consequence, for a Man to forego his own Inclinations, even in Matters of no great Importance. But he who hath attained to the Faculty of doing this in any Case whatsoever, is truly free, and great, above the Reach and Envy of Fortune, and at the highest Pitch of Human Perfection. Yet even this Man will find his Virtues called to the Test: For the old Enemy of Souls is ever framing some Stratagem to undo good Men, and lies in Ambush Night and Day, to catch an Opportunity of ensnaring unwary Souls. Let then his Diligence provoke yours, and be not less assiduous to save than his to destroy you. For this is the Purport of thy Lord's Command, *Watch and Pray, that ye enter not into Temptation.*

Matt. xxvi.

CHAP. XLV.

In Man dwelleth no good Thing.

Disciple.] *LORD, what is Man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man, that thou visiteſt him?* *Pſal.* viii. How can he deſerve to be aſſiſted by thy Grace, or ſuccoured by thy Favour? What Right have I, ſo vile a Wretch, eſpecially to complain unto my God, if he withdraw his Preſence, and leave me to myſelf? Or, if I beg and pray for Comforts, what have I to alledge in my own Behalf? How can I take it ill, if he reject my Petitions? This I am ſenſible is all I ought to think, or can pretend to ſay, That I have Nothing, and am Nothing, and in my own Nature tend to and purſue after Vanity and Nothing. A miſerable Creature, faint and feeble, incapable of ſo much as one good Deſire, till animated and ſtrengthened by thee. Fickle and mutable, ſubject to Infirmities innumerable, and perpetual Decays; but Thou, my God, art *the ſame, Yeſterday, and To-day, and for ever:* *Heb.* xiii. Ever happy, and juſt, and wiſe, and good, and ordering all Things for the beſt, after the Counſel of thy Divine Will. Well were it, if I were but equally diſpoſed to Good and Evil; but the Corruption of my Nature; alas! preponderates ſtrongly to Vanity and Vice. I eaſily fall from my own Stedfaſtneſs, and am carried about with every ſhifting Wind of Time, and Chance, and Paſſion.

And yet thus weak and veering as I am, thy helping Hand can Comfort and Confirm me. Thy powerful Grace, without any Human Aids, can work Wonders in me; can ſtrengthen my Reſolutions, ſcatter my Fears, and fill my Soul with Reſt and ſweet Content. If, when I thirſt after higher Degrees of Virtue

tue and Devotion, or if I fly to thee for Succour in Distress, when all other Succours fail me, (and all but thine will and must prove ineffectual) if then I could but abandon all other Hopes, and repose my whole Confidence in thee alone; then might I entertain some Expectations of thy Favour; then wait with Joy for the chearful Returns of Grace and Comfort from above. For all my Successes are thy free Gift, and I myself a despicable Wretch, not able to effect any good, not in a Condition to merit the least of all thy Mercies.

What therefore can I have to boast of, who, till I despise and go out of myself, am not so much as qualify'd to receive Assistance from Thee? Or how can I desire the Applause and Admiration of Men? What! Shall I pretend to glory of Weakness, and Inconstancy, and Nothing? This were a Vanity beyond Example, an Extravagance beyond Imagination. How foolish and absurd, nay, how hurtful and destructive a Vice is Ambition, which, by undue Pursuit of Honour, robs us of true Honour; and, affecting Favour with Men, incurs Punishment and Displeasure from God? For he who labours to please himself, is sure at the same Time to offend Thee; and loses true substantial Virtue, by coveting empty Praise. For true Honour and Virtue consists in glorying, not in ourselves, but in Thee, O Lord; in magnifying, not our own Attainments or Performances, but thy free Grace; and in loving and delighting in nothing, but so far only as may advance thy Honour.

Psalm cxv. *Not unto Me, therefore, not unto Me, but unto thy Name be the Praise.* May Men commend and extol not my Works, but thy Power, which inspired, produced and perfected them: And may this Commendation devolve so entirely upon thy Grace, that not the least Part of it may fall upon my Concurrence with it. Far be it from me to arrogate any thing

thing to myself; for while I rejoice in Thee, I find nothing in myself to glory in, but my Infirmities. And in them I will gladly glory; because the greater my Weakness is, the more visible and eminent is thy Strength, which is so conspicuously perfect in it. Let Unbelieving *Jews seek Honour one of another*; but I who profess myself one of the Faithful, *will seek Honour which cometh from God only.* For, what is all the Fame, and Respect, and Greatness of this World, if put in the Balance of the Eternal Glory, but exquisite Folly, deceitful Bubble, and altogether lighter than Vanity itself? All Honour therefore, and Praise, all Might and Majesty be ascribed to thee, O blessed Trinity, my God, my Light, my Truth, my Succour and Defence, my Refuge and Comfort, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

John v.

Chap. XLVI.

Of despising Worldly Honour.

Christ.] If thou seest others grow great in Reputation and Preferment, while thou art overlooked and despised, let this, my Son, be no Concern to thee. Look up to Me and set thy Affections and Hopes in Heaven, and then the Neglect and Contempt of Men will give thee little Trouble.

Disciple.] Were it not, Lord, for the Blindness and Corruption of Nature, which makes me fond of Vanities and Joys, I should have juster Notions of these Matters. For he, who rightly understands himself, cannot but discern, that it is not in the Power of any Thing without, to do him real Prejudice; and consequently, that he can have no reasonable Ground to complain of thy Providence, however it thinks fit to dispose

disposse of such Matters. The Consciousness of my own Sins convinces me, I have deserved, that all the Creatures should conspire and make War against me. To me belongs Shame and Confusion, but to Thee only Honour and Praise is due. And thou hast taught me, that to bear Contempt and Hatred, and barbarous Treatment, with Humility and Patience, is the only Method of attaining inward Peace, and true Satisfaction; The Virtue which must recommend me to thy Favour; the best Pre-disposition for Light and Grace; and the surest, closest Band of Union with thyself.

Chap. XLVII.

Happiness is not to be had, by the Favour or Friendship of Men.

Christ.] He that purposes to be Happy, by the Affection or Acquaintance of the best, the greatest Man alive, will always find his Mind unsettled and perplexed. For even the Best and Greatest are but Mortals; and the effectual Remedy against immoderate Concern for their being taken away from thee, will be to court the Favour of an Eternal and Immortal Friend. Now, the less Confidence any Man reposes in any Earthly Comfort, so much the more he ingratiates himself with God. The better he acquaints himself with his own Vileness, and the less he is in his own Eyes, the higher he rises in God's Esteem. But they, who vainly fancy any thing that is good or meritorious in themselves, put an effectual Bar to Divine Grace. For this is given to the Humble, and the Spirit of God chuses the contrite Heart for the Place of his peculiar Residence. Would'st thou aban-

don Self conceit, and wean thy Heart from all Fondneſs for the Creatures, it is not to be imagined what Comforts, what overflowing Joys, I would infuſe into thy Soul. But, while theſe employ thy Thoughts and Deſires, thou art diverted from all higher Objects, and by being too intent upon his Works, loſeſt and forgetteſt the Almighty Maker. Learn then to ſubdue thy own Will, that thou may'ſt clearly underſtand and readily comply with mine. For any other Object, tho' ever ſo trifling and inconſiderable in its own Nature, yet, if unduly priz'd, and immoderately loved, corrupts the Mind, and checks its aſpiring after the Chief, the only Good.

Chap. XLVIII.

Againſt Vain and Pompous Learning.

Chriſt. DO not, my Son, ſuppoſe, that the Excellence of a Man conſiſts in Subtilty of Wit, or Quaintneſs of Expreſſion. For the Kingdom of God does not lie in Elegance of Speech, or Fineneſs of Parts, but in Innocence of Life and Good Works. Let my Words be thy principal Study; for theſe awaken Attention, enlighten the Underſtanding, kindle a holy Zeal, provoke true Contrition, and heal the Wounds they make, with a Spiritual Balm of Grace and ſolid Comfort. Let not the growing Wiſer and more Learned be the end thou propoſeſt to thyſelf, in Reading; but read, that thou may'ſt be qualified to practiſe, and let thy Knowledge be ſeen by ſubduing thy Vices and Paſſions. For this is Improvement indeed, and will turn to better Account, than the niceſt and moſt diſtinguiſhing Skill, in all the Controverſies and difficult Points, that ever employed the

the Tongues and Pens of wrangling Logicians, Philosophers, and Divines. And when thou haſt run thro' the whole Compaſs of Learning, yet all will turn at laſt upon one Single Point; and the whole Profit of thy Pains lies in a narrow Room.

If thou wilt be knowing indeed, learn of Me; for I am the only Maſter that teach Men Knowledge. I give more perfect, more Sublime Underſtanding to Babes, to the Humble and Sincere, than all the Celebrated Sons of Art have ever been able to do. And thoſe whom I inſtruct, grow truly wiſe, are preſently enlightened and refined, and, by an aſtoniſhing Proficience in Virtue, outſtrip all the admired Schemes of Morality. Moſt wretched are thoſe Vain Men, who with infinite Toil and Time, lay themſelves out upon the unprofitable Curioſities of Human Wiſdom, and take no Pains to inform themſelves in their Duty to Me. The Hour, alas! draws on apace: when their Maſter Chriſt ſhall come with terrible Pomp, and call each Man to ſtrict Account, and ſound every Conſcience to the Bottom. Then *ſhall Jeruſalem be ſearched with Candles*; then ſhall the hidden Things of Darkneſs be brought to Light; and no Man's Eloquence or Subtilty of Arguing ſhall do him any Service, before that All-ſeeing Judge. I raiſe the Meek, and Man of Mean Senſe, in an Inſtant, and teach him at once the Grounds of Eternal Truths, better than a Courſe of many Years ſpent in Laborious Study, and the moſt exquiſite Methods of Schools and Univerſities. I bring Men to Right Apprehenſions of Things, without any Noiſe of Words, without the Formality of Syſtems, or Vain Oſtentations of Cavilling Sophiſtry, or Regular Diſputing. Of me alone Men learn to deſpiſe the World, to think Things preſent below their Pains and Care, to love and ſeek thoſe that are Heavenly and Eternal, to decline Honours, to bear Injuries and Affronts, to truſt

Zeph. i.

truſt and hope in me alone, to wiſh for nothing but my Favour, *and to eſteem all things but droſs and dung, ſo they may win Chriſt.* *Pſal.* iii.

Some Diſciples of mine have made ſuch wonderful Improvements under me, as even to ſpeak Things above human Comprehenſion; and grown wiſer in Solitude and Cloiſters, than any Converſation of learned Men, or Volumes and Libraries ever ſo carefully peruſed, could have made them. But this is not every Man's Caſe; for I do not communicate to all alike. Some I inſtruct in common Matters, others in abſtruſe and peculiar Notions. And as the Meaſure and Quality of the Matter, ſo the Manner of imparting it is very different. To ſome I have ſhew'd myſelf in Figures and Parables, Dreams, and myſtick Repreſentations; to others I have revealed the moſt important Secrets in the moſt clear intelligible Method. Books ſpeak alike to all, but all are not qualified to be taught by them alike. But I, inſtead of dead Letters, preſented to the outward Senſes, perform my Buſineſs within. I fill the Mind with Truth, ſuit myſelf to each Man's Genius and Capacity, ſearch every Corner of the Heart, underſtand their moſt retired Thoughts, inſpire good Deſires, promote and finiſh thoſe Deſires, by bringing them to Action: and deal to every one the various Gifts of my Spirit in ſuch Kinds and Proportions as I ſee moſt uſeful and ſeaſonable.

Chap. XLIX.

Of meddling with the World as little as may be.

Christ.] IN many Things, my Son, content thyself with being ignorant, and chuse to live as a Man dead, while among the Living; one whose Thoughts and Affections are crucified to all the World, and all the World to them. Many Things are to be overlook'd, as if you saw them not; thy Mind drawn off from the distracting Variety of Objects, and fastened close down to the Things that make for thy Peace and Salvation. In controverted Points, it is generally much better to content one's self with avoiding erroneous Opinions, and their Vicious Consequences, and leave others to abound in their own Sense (where their Difference from thee does not apparently hazard their Souls) than to engage in hot Disputes, and spend thy precious Hours in Wrangling and fierce Contention. And even in Disputes, not to be hot and pertinacious; for if God and Truth be on thy Side, and thou canst with Comfort appeal to thy Judge above, thy Concern will not be great for Victory and Approbation below.

Disciple.] Alas! Lord, what a wretched Case is this World in! how distant from this meek and abstracted Temper of Mind! Trifling Loss is seriously lamented. A little sordid Gain engages Mens Time, and Labour, and Thoughts. The Day is too short for their vigorous Pursuits, and anxious Cares break their Sleep, while all their spiritual Concerns lie neglected and forgotten. Their Diligence and Study is determined to Matters of small or no Importance; and the one Thing necessary is laid aside, as if it were not worth a single Thought. So vain is Man, so totally immersed in sensible Objects and worldly Cares; and

so contentedly does he perish in Vanity and Vexation, unless thy Grace make him wiser, and raise his Mind to better and eternal Concerns.

Chap. L.

Against a fond and easy Credulity.

Disciple.] *LORD, be thou my help in trouble, for vain is the help of man.* *Psalm* cviii.

How often have I failed of Succour and true Friendship, where I had most Reason to expect it? How often found it where I entertained no such Expectations? So vain and uncertain is all Trust in Man, so entirely does the Safety of Good Men depend upon thee alone. Blessed therefore, and for ever admired be that good Providence, which orders and disposes all Events to thy impotent and fickle, thy ignorant and silly, thy deceitful and deceivable Creatures!

Who among all the Sons of Men ever behaved himself with so prudent Care and exact Circumspection, as not sometimes to be over-reached by Treachery and Trick, and involved in Difficulties and Troubles, which the most jealous Foresight knew not how to descry or suspect? but he who places no Confidence in human Subtilty, and rests in God alone, and acts with downright Honesty, and a good Conscience, is less subject to such Inconvenience than cunning and intriguing Men; or if he be surprized and imposed upon, yet is his Deliverance generally more speedy and effectual, and his Comforts in the mean while more sensible and supporting. For thou, Lord, never forsakest those utterly who put their Trust in thee. A faithful Friend, and such as will stand by us in Adversity and Want, is exceeding hard to be found; but

thou art always the ſame, and no Change of Circumſtances can change thee, or abate thy Affection. Happy is the Soul that is built upon the Rock Chriſt: Were this my Caſe, the Fear of the Malicious would not diſtract, nor the Calumnies of the Envious diſturb me.

But who can foreſee all future Inconveniences, or prevent all that he may foreſee? And if the Ills we are aware of, and provide againſt, are ſo grievous to be borne; how much more heavy will be thoſe Wounds, whoſe Smart and Terror are doubled by Surprize? We often blame ourſelves for not being wiſer and have Reaſon to condemn our too eaſy Credulity; that eſpecially, which greedily aſſents to the Flatteries and Commendations of Men, and relies upon their mighty Profeſſions of Friendſhip and Eſteem. For tho' they call and think us Angels, yet we cannot but be conſcious to ourſelves that we are no better than Men, frail and wretched Men. Whom therefore ſhall I believe? whom indeed but thee, O Lord? For thou art Truth itſelf, incapable of deceiving, or of being deceived. But, as for Men, they are all Liars, weak and unconſtant, frail and treacherous; eſpecially in what they ſay, ſo exceeding fabulous and vain, that it is a Point of Prudence to ſuſpend our Faith; and thou haſt wiſely taught us to beware of their falſe Inſinuations. Thou haſt forewarned us of their Treachery and Malice, told us, that a Man's *Enemies ſhall be thoſe of his own Kindred and Houſhold*; and that when *Men ſay, Lo, Chriſt is here, or lo he is there, we ought not to believe them.* The Truth of theſe Predictions I have learned by ſad Experience, and wiſh I may grow wiſer at my own Expence.

Pſal. cxvi.

Matth. xxiv.

Be ſure, (ſays one) you keep this private which I tell you; and yet that very Man in the next Company divulges what he had imparted juſt before, under the

the Seal of Secrecy. From such unsincere Dealers as these I beg to be delivered, and from their treacherous Ways; that I may neither come within their Power of betraying and abusing my Confidence, nor injure any who repose the like in me; make me then then, Lord, a rigid Observer of Truth, and religiously firm to my Word; for what I cannot but resent when done to me, it can never become me to put upon any other Person, Silence indeed, and forbearing to concern one's self in the Affairs of our Neighbours, is not only a Virtue, but a Convenience and a Benefit. Caution in crediting, Reserve in speaking, and revealing one's self to very few, are the best Securities both of Peace and a good Understanding with the World, and of the inward Peace of our own Minds. Endeavouring to approve ourselves to the Knower and Searcher of Hearts, and not suffering every Blast of idle Report or empty Profession, to carry us about, but guarding our Conversation carefully, and labouring to conform every Thought, Word and Action to the divine Will; these are a good Man's Safety, and Satisfaction, and Wisdom. How sure and calm a Retreat does that Man make, who chuses to preserve thy Favour, by making an Escape from Pomp and Noise; preferring thy Approbations before the loudest Fame and Applause, and willingly abandoning those painted Follies, whose glittering Outsides impose upon our Senses; who prefers contrite Sorrow, severe Virtue, and solitary Devotion, before the showry Pleasures of the World, or that empty Admiration which Ambition and Vain-glory affect? Praise is indeed the Consequence and Encouragement of Virtue; but it is sometimes so unseasonably applied, as to become its Bane and Corruption too. For the whole Life of Man is one continual Temptation, and we have a subtle Adversary to deal with, who slips no Advantage of undoing us. Our Praises he improves to his own Pur-

poſes, by ſwelling us up with them into Pride and Self-conceit. And many Souls have periſhed by that Virtue, publiſhed and celebrated; which, if unknown and unobſerved, had come to mighty Perfection, and been infinitely happy by the Advantage of Secrecy and Silence.

Chap. LI.

Of truſting in God, when Men ſpeak Ill of us.

Chriſt.] STAND faſt, my Son, and be not terrified with the Shock of Calumny and Reproach, but let me be thy Refuge and ſure Confidence. Alas! what are Words but empty Sounds, that break and ſcatter in the Air, and make no real Impreſſion? If not Report alone, but thy own Conſcience too reproach thee, bewail thy Guilt, and reform what hath been amiſs. But if upon Examination thou find no Ground of accuſing thyſelf, ſtrengthen thy Mind in Innocence, look upon this wrongful Judgment as a Suffering for God's Sake, and bear it accordingly with Patience and Contentedneſs. He expects that thou *ſhould reſiſt even unto Blood*, when called to it; but how will the Man be able to endure Wounds and Blows, who is not yet a Match for Words and Affronts? Enquire a little into the true Grounds of ſuch Impatience, and thou ſhalt find it a Symptom of a Soul ſick and indiſpoſed. For how can it be otherwiſe accounted for, than that thou art yet carnal, and retaineſt a greater Regard for the Opinion of Men, than can be well conſiſtent with a Perſon who hath renounced the World, and profeſſes to dedicate himſelf entirely to God? Whence is Reproof ſo grating and

Heb. xii.

and uneasy? Whence that solicitous Care to contrive Excuses? Whence that forward Zeal in thy own Vindication, if not from a Dread and Abhorrence of that Contempt, to which thy supposed Miscarriages would expose thee? Fondness of Honour and Reputation lies at the Bottom, and inordinate Desire to recommend thyself to Man's Esteem. Which shews, thou art not yet so humble, so resigned, but that a Principle of Vanity lurks still within; nor is the World yet dead to thee, or thou to the World.

Attend diligently to thy Instructions, and the Censures of ten thousand Men will not be able to disturb thee. Let them proceed in their Envy and Malice, and blacken thy Name after the most spiteful Manner that Hell itself can practise or invent, yet what art thou the worse? Can all this change thy Person? Or hath thy Head one Hair the less for it? Do but compose thy Mind, and resolve to despise it, and all blows over. These Scandals vanish and fly away like Motes in the Sun, and are neither more nor less than what Resentment makes them. To be provoked with every slanderous Word, argues a Littleness of Soul, a Want of due Regard for God; but the brave generous Mind, whose All is in God, and who refers himself entirely to his Judgment, is above the Terrors and Discouragements of Men, and lays no Stress upon their Notions of Things. For their Notions are frequently rash and false; they seldom do, and sometimes cannot, enter into the real Merits of the Cause; but to Me all Hearts are open, and from my piercing Eyes no Secrets are hid. I know distinctly both in what Manner, and with what Intention, every Thing is done. The Person who receives, and does the Wrong, are both under my Cognizance; and even the Wrong itself is done by my Permission; that by this Means the Thoughts of many Hearts may be revealed. I shall not fail to make a just and clear Decision

between the Guilty and the Innocent, and call both to Account hereafter, however I may think fit to try them in the mean while, and keep those Things in the Dark at present, which then shall be notorious to all the World. And what Mistakes soever may prevail now, my Judgment will be according to Equity and Truth; and my Sentence, once pronounced, can never be reversed. Few indeed are capable of discerning the Justice of my Providence, in suffering innocent Men to be traduced, and their honest Actions misunderstood. But I do nothing without wise Reasons, and neither am, nor can be mistaken in my Methods, how much soever short-sighted and inconsiderate Men are confounded about them.

Appeal then in all these Cases to my Determination, and let the Matter rest so fully there, as not only to disregard what others think concerning thee, but even in some Measure to distrust thy own Judgment concerning thyself. Consider, that I think many Things fit for my Servants, which they can by no Means imagine convenient for themselves. This very Reflection preserves a good Man's Temper in every Accident of Life, because he knows that every Accident falls out thus by my Direction. This buoys his Spirits up against the Insults and Injuries of Calumny and Detraction, and keeps them from swelling into Pride and immoderate Joy, when his Innocence is cleared, and his Virtue commended. He knows that God sees not as Man sees; for Man judges according to outward and fallible Appearances, but God searches the Reins and the Heart, and judges righteous Judgment.

Psal. vii.

Disciple.] O Lord, thou *righteous Judge, strong and patient*, who understandest the Frailty and the Wickedness of Men, be thou my strong Rock, my Trust and Defence. For even in my own Conscience I dare not be too confident, since many

many Things which to me are either unknown or forgotten, thou haſt a perfect Knowledge, and exact Remembrance of. I ought therefore in all Reproofs and Reproaches to ſubmit with Patience, even *though my Heart condemn me not*; becauſe thou, who permitteſt theſe Things, *are greater than my Heart, and knoweſt all things.* Thus Reaſon and Religion both convince me, I ought to behave myſelf; but, if at any Time Paſſion and Frailty have exceeded in too nice and tender a Senſe of theſe Things, pardon, I beſeech thee, what is paſt, and enable me to be more reſigned for the Time to come. Thy Mercy alone will avail me more than all my laboured Excuſes; and Pardon is what I rather chuſe, than the moſt confident Teſtimony of my own Conſcience. For though I *ſhould know nothing by myſelf, yet am I not hereby juſtified*; for *he that judgeth me is the Lord:* The Lord, who will one Day *bring to light the hidden things of diſhoneſty*, even thoſe, which have eſcaped the Committer's own Obſervation. And therefore, *if thou, Lord, ſhould'ſt be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, no Fleſh living could be juſtified in thy ſight.*

John iii.

1 *Cor.* iv.

Pſal. cxxx. 3. *Pſal.* cxliii. 2.

Chap. LII.

Nothing too much to ſuffer for Eternal Life.

Chriſt.] LET not, my Son, thy Labours or Sufferings for me and thy Duty, or any other Sort of Hardſhip or Tribulation in this World, ſo far damp thy Courage, but that my Promiſe ſtill ſhould be a ſure Anchor-hold of Hope; and this Reflection ever miniſters Comfort, that I am able to recompenſe thee, not only beyond what is reaſonable to expect,

expect, but even impossible for thee to wish or imagine. Thy Toils will not continue very long, nor will thy Pain and Trouble always torment thee. Wait but a little longer, and look forward and see how glorious a Prospect opens itself: How swiftly the End of all thy Sufferings approaches; and how suddenly Sorrow and Tumult vanish away. Even Time itself is not of everlasting Continuance; but that which is bounded within so very narrow a Space, as this short Span of Life cannot in any fair Computation be counted long or great. Proceed then in thy Duty with Vigor and undaunted Resolution; ply thy Work hard in my Vineyard, and fill the Station I have appointed thee to; thy Wages are certain and valuable, for I myself will *be thy exceeding great Reward.*

Gen. xvii.

Persist in Writing, in Reading, in Singing, Meditation, in Devout Prayer, in Fortitude and Patience. For the Things prepared for them that love God, are richly worth these and greater Conflicts; all thou must do, all thou canst suffer, are in no Degree worthy to be compared with them. The Day is coming, and fix'd in my unalterable Decree, adorn'd with the Triumphs of Joy and Peace; That mighty Revolution, when these alternate Successions of Day and Night shall cease; and everlasting uninterrupted Light shall shine for ever. There shall be Lustre infinite, Satisfaction unbroken, unconceivable, Rest Eternal, and above the Power of any future Danger. There shall be then no Place left for that melancholy Wish; *O that thou would'st deliver me from the Body of this Death!* no Occasion for that Complaint, *Wo is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Meshech, and to have my Habitation in this barren Wilderness.* For even *the last Enemy* shall be subdued, *and Death itself destroyed.* Salvation then

Rom. vii.

Psal. cxx.

1 *Cor.* xv.

then and Life shall reign for ever; Sorrow and Anguish, Sighs and Tears shall flee away; a Crown of Rejoicing put upon every Head, and thou shalt be happy in the sweet Society *of Saints and Angels, the Spirits of Just Men made perfect, and the Assembly of the First-born.* Heb. xii.

Oh! couldst thou now but see the Heavens open, and with the Ken of Mortal Eye behold the bright and everlasting Crowns of my Chosen; Were thy Heart large enough to admit a just Idea of their Trophies and Glories, whom once the World despised, and thought not worthy to live upon the Earth; thou then would'st gladly embrace their Sufferings and Reproaches, abandon all thy vain Desires of Worldly Greatness, and disdain the perishing Pleasures of the present Life. Humility and Patience would then appear in all their native Beauties; and even Affliction and Ignominy display such Charms, as must attract thy Love and make thee esteem the Reproaches of Christ greater Treasures and Gain, than all the Majesty and Honour, and most celebrated Reputation, that a mortal State is capable of.

Attend then seriously to these important Truths. For they, if considered and believed in good earnest, will stop thy Mouth, and effectually silence all thy Complaints. For sure the Sufferings of a Moment cannot be thought too dear a Price for Eternal Happiness in Exchange. Surely the Kingdom of God is no trifling Concern. And when the losing or attaining this lies before thee, nothing can be too much to prevent that Loss; nothing a hard Bargain for that infinite Advantage. Grovel then upon the Earth no longer, but stand Erect, and lift thy Eyes and Heart to Heaven. See there the blessed Effects, the mighty Success, of all those sharp Conflicts, which my Saints, while in the Body, underwent; the End of all their Trials and Adversities, their painful Severities and pious Labours,

bours. Theſe mortify'd afflicted Men once reputed the *Filth of the World, and the Off-ſcouring of all Things*, the common Mark of Inſolence and Malice, are now in perfect Joy; their Sorrows ſwallowed up in tranſporting Bliſs and Comfort; their Dangers changed into ſecure Peace; their Labours into Eaſe and ſweet Repoſe; their Perſecutions and wrongful Accuſations before the Bar of Men, into Thrones of Glory, where they ſit and judge the World, and live, and rejoice, and reign with me for ever.

1 *Cor.* iv.

Chap. LIII.

The Joys of Eternity, and Miſeries of this preſent Life.

Diſciple.] O Bleſſed Manſions of the Heavenly City! O bright and glorious Day of Eternal Light and Bliſs! A Day that never declines; a Sun that never ſets, nor is obſcured by any ſucceeding Night; but a State always chearful, always fixed, and ſecured from Change and Sorrow, from Danger and Decay. How do I pant and thirſt after that happy Hour, when this Bleſſed Morning ſhall dawn and ſhed its Beams, and with a wondrous Luſtre put an End to all the Darkneſs and Miſeries of Mortality? It does indeed already ſhine in the Hearts and Hopes of theſe good Men, whoſe Converſation is even now in Heaven: But even theirs is but a diſtant Proſpect, and ſuch as, while they ſojourn here, preſents Things only in a Glaſs. The Citizens and Inhabitants of thoſe Bleſſed Regions ſee it with their naked Eye: they feel and enjoy its Sweetneſs, and are all enlightened with its Rays; while the diſtreſſed Sons of

Eve

Eve endure and groan under their Exile, and cannot but lament the Bitterneſs of this imperfect gloomy Day, which Men on Earth call Evil. A Day but ſhort, and which is worſe, diſmal and uncomfortable. For, who can worthily expreſs the Pains, the Perplexities of Body and Soul, which are the neceſſary, the inſeparable Incumbrances of Man's preſent Condition? A Condition, wherein he is polluted with ſo many Sins, entangled in ſo many Difficulties, beſet with ſo many Misfortunes, oppreſſed with ſo many Fears, diſtracted with ſo many Cares, diſturbed and diverted from his main Concern by ſo many Impertinencies, deluded with ſo many Vanities, confounded with ſo many Errors, waſted and worn out with ſo much Labour and Trouble; aſſaulted by Temptations, emaſculated by Pleaſures, and tormented with great Variety of Neceſſities and Want?

O! when will there be an End of this ſo complicated Miſery? When may I hope to be enlarged and releaſed from this Bondage of Sin? When ſhall my Thoughts and Deſires centre, and be for ever fixed, in Thee, my God, alone? When may I hope to attain true Joy in Thee, without any Allay of bodily Suffering, without any Diſtraction of Mind? When ſhall I reſt in firm untroubled Peace? Peace from Accidents and Temptations without, Peace from Guilt and Miſguiding, from the Solicitations of Luſt, and the Violence of Paſſion within? When ſhall I ſee my Jeſus Face to Face, and contemplate the Beauties of his Kingdom and Glorious Godhead? When will my deareſt Saviour be my All in All, and receive me to thoſe bliſsful Habitations prepared for them that love him and that are loved by him, before the Foundation of the World?

Behold! I am here deſolate and poor, a Stranger and alone in an Enemy's Country; where Wars rage and never ceaſe, and terrible Diſtreſſes come thick

and

and ſtrong upon me every Day and Hour. Be thou my Comfort in this exiled and deſolate Condition. Aſſwage my Pain, and incline thy Favour to thy Servant, whoſe parched and languiſhing Soul *gaſpeth unto thee as a thirſty Land.* Thou only art able to do this; For, what the miſtaken World calls Comforts, are but ſo many freſh Additions to my Burthen. I long moſt earneſtly to enjoy, but cannot yet attain my Wiſh. Fain would I graſp and cling to heavenly Things, but am detained and faſtened down to Earth, by Vanities below, and unmortified Affections. My Mind labours to get above theſe: but even, when the Spirit is willing I find the Fleſh extremely weak, and my ſenſual prevails over my better and heavenly Inclinations.

Pſal. cxliii.

Thus am I, wretched Man, involved in a perpetual War, and live in Contradiction to myſelf; my own Hindrance and Torment, moving different Ways, and purſuing different Ends and Proſpects, at one and the ſame Time. How great is my Concern and Conflict, when I ſet my Mind to Meditate and Pray, and, in the Midſt of this Exerciſe, am interrupted by a Clutter of worldly and carnal Imaginations crowding in upon me? *Go not far from me, O my God, neither caſt away thy Servant in Diſpleaſure.* Scatter theſe dark and gloomy Clouds, which intercept my Viſion of thee, by the Brightneſs of thy Lightning; Thunder upon them from Heaven, *caſt out thine Arrows and diſcomfit them.* Recollect my broken and ſcattered Thoughts, help me to forget the Things of this World, to reject and deſpiſe, and effectually drive away all ſinful Imaginations. Aſſiſt me, thou ſubſtantial Truth, and root me faſt, that no Blaſt of Vanity may ſhake and unſettle my Heart. Diffuſe thy Heavenly Sweetneſs through my Soul, and chaſe away all nauſeous, unſavoury, and impure Affections, for theſe cannot ſtand before thee.

Pſal. cxliv.

Par-

Particularly, dearest Lord, I implore thy Compassion upon my Infirmities; and in thy Mercy impute not to me my many wandring Thoughts in Prayer. For there, I must confess, my Distractions are great and frequent; and I am often least of all in that Place, where I stand or kneel: Thus, while my Body is before thy Footstool, my Mind is carried away I know not whither. And this is a very melancholy Reflection, such as gives me Occasion to suspect, and deeply bewail myself. Since where my Thoughts are, there properly and indeed am I; and where my Thoughts frequent, and delight to dwell, there, without doubt, is the Object of my Affection and Concern; and that, which either natural Disposition or long Custom renders most delightful, that, to be sure, is most familiar, and comes continually uppermost. All this I gather from that Observation, which thou, Eternal Truth, hast left us, that *where our Treasure is, there will our Heart be also.* *Matth.* vi.

This then is the Rule, by which I try and sound the Bent of my Heart; If I love Heaven, the Thoughts of it will be frequent and pleasant to me. But if I love the World, the Effect of this will be, that I shall feel Excess of Joy in prosperous Events, and be as immoderate in my Grief for those that are otherwise. If I love the Flesh, wanton and carnal Imaginations will often return upon me, and be entertained with Satisfaction; but if I love the Spirit, I shall find in Spiritual Objects a grateful Relish, and dwell upon them with true Delight. For this my own Senses and Experience assure me, that what I love most, I am best pleased to be entertained with, greediest to hear and forwardest to talk of, most careful to remember, and to preserve deep and lasting Impressions upon my Mind. And therefore though I cannot attain to it so fully as I wish and strive, yet I can plainly perceive, and do truly value and admire, the Happiness of

of Them, who can abandon all, and ſtick to Thee alone; that commit a holy Violence upon their natural Inclinations, Crucify the Fleſh, and with a pure bright Zeal, and a clear Conſcience, can offer holy, fervent Prayers, a ſpiritual and unblemiſh'd Sacrifice: Where All without are forbidden Entrance, and All within is compoſed. Theſe Men, ſo firmly intent upon Thee and their Devotions, are fit to praiſe thee with thoſe Angels, whoſe refined Excellencies they ſo happily aſpire after, and to whoſe bleſſed Society thou wilt one Day exalt and admit them.

Chap. LIV.

Of the Deſires of Eternal Life, and the Happineſs of Them who ſtrive Manfully.

Chriſt.] MY Son, when thou feeleſt thy Soul inflamed with an eager Deſire of Eternal Happineſs, and thinkeſt long to be releaſed from this Priſon of the Body, that thou may'ſt be bleſſed with a nearer and more diſtinct View, a perfect, full and uninterrupted Fruition, of my Brightneſs and Majeſty; ſet open all the Avenues of thy Soul, and greedily receive the holy Inſpiration. Expreſs thy humbleſt Thanks to God, and be duly ſenſible of his Goodneſs, who deals ſo bountifully with thee, viſits thee with his Mercy, ſupports and ſtrengthens thee with his Grace, and raiſes thoſe Affections up to Heaven, which have a fatal innate Tendency to immerſe thy Soul in Earth, and Fleſh, and Senſe. For, do not Miſtake the Matter, no Reaſonings or Endeavours of thy own have Power to effect ſo good a Work, or to create thoſe Spiritual Inclinations; the Finger of God is in them, and they are owing to no leſs

leſs noble a Cauſe, than the free and bountiful Donation of Divine Grace and Favour: The Deſign of which is to advance and exalt thy Virtues; to make thee humble and modeſt, with Reflections upon the Strength of another made perfect in thy Weakneſs; to fit thee for future Trials, and ſorer Conflicts; to engage thy Affections, and encourage thy Perſeverance, in the faithful Service of ſo gracious, ſo good a Maſter.

Nor let thy Spirits be dejected, Son, if this be not done with all that Zeal, and intire Reſignation of a Heart perfectly undivided, which thou could'ſt wiſh. For, as in common Fire there will always be ſome Smoke; ſo in thoſe holy Flames many Men are ſincerely deſirous of heavenly Things, who yet cannot quite diveſt themſelves of Carnal Affections, nor be abſolutely free from all Temptations. And therefore ſome other Proſpects will often interpoſe, as well as that of promoting God's Glory only, by thoſe good Actions, for which the Aſſiſtances of his Grace are ſought, and earneſtly implored; of this thy own Experience convinces thee by ſundry Inſtances, in which thou ſeeſt no Reaſon to ſuſpect thy own Integrity. Nor will all that be condemned at the laſt Day, which was attempted with a Mixture of ſome Deſire to promote thy own Advantage. Only take care that this Deſire prevail not ſo far, as to incline thee to prefer what may contribute to thy Profit or Delight, before thoſe Things which will procure my Favour and Acceptance, and be for mine and for Religion's Honour. For with a wiſe conſiderate Chriſtian, my Will takes place above his own Deſires, or any the moſt inviting Object; and if it reign not in his Heart alone, yet it always ſits Supreme, and over-rules the reſt. *I know all thy Deſires, and thy Groanings are not hid from me.* Thou would'ſt this Inſtant be admitted into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God; the bliſsful and eternal Manſions of thy heavenly *Pſal.* xxxviij.

Father's House are thy Longings and Delight; and *as the Hart panteth after the Water-springs, so doth thy Soul pant and thirst after me.* But as yet thou art not ripe for these Joys; that happy Hour is not come; for this Life is the Time of Warfare, and Action, and Trial, and not of Rest, and Joy, and Triumph; and thou must be content to wait with Patience, till the Kingdom of God shall come in Perfection.

Psalm xlii.

The Condition of Mortals upon Earth, is that Exercise and Discipline; the Joys they feel are Comforts and Supports, not full and perfect Happiness; they are given not to satisfy, but only to sustain them. And therefore receive them as they are, and use them to their proper Purposes; that by them thy Constancy and Patience may be preserv'd from sinking under the Weight of any Difficulties, which either the doing or suffering Things, to which Frail and Corrupt Nature is averse, may at any time expose thee. For the Change of a Man's self is a very laborious Undertaking, and yet this must be done. The Flesh with its Lusts must be crucified, a New Heart and a New Spirit introduced, many Things done, which offer Violence to a Man's Inclinations, many forgone and let alone, to which he is strongly disposed. Others thou shalt often observe crown'd with Success, when thy own no less painful Endeavours are defeated and disappointed: Others look'd upon as Oracles, when thy better and wiser Advice is disregarded and despised. Others will suffer long, and at last obtain their Desire; Thou perhaps, tho' equally patient, equally fervent and zealous in thy Application, dismist with a Repulse; Others be great in Fame or general Esteem, while thy more deserving Virtues are pass'd over in Silence; Others caressed, prefer'd, trusted in Matters of Consequence, and looked upon as useful and necessary, while thou art reputed an useless and insignificant Person. These mistaken or partial Judgments of Men, will grate hard upon

upon Human Nature; but even these will turn to good account, if borne with Meekness, and Modesty, and Silence. For these are the very Methods by which God brings the Fidelity of his Servants to the Touch; 'tis thus that he discovers, whether they have gained a Conquest over Nature and themselves. And no Sort of Mortification is of happier Consequence, than that which exposes Men to the Sight and Suffering of Things, to which their own Minds are most violently averse. Especially, when what they cannot but conceive most unfit, most absurd and odd, constrains them to go against their own Sense, and submit to a higher Power, without any reserve to the private Judgment of their own Reason in the Case. This is indeed hard, and a Perfection of Submission not easy to be compass'd; but did Men well consider, how vast the Advantages of a Temper so resigned are at present, how glorious the Reward of it hereafter, and how quickly the Troubles it exposes them to will end in that Reward; the Comforts of such Discipline would be sensible and great, and they would even enjoy their Afflictions and Temptations, sustained with so pure, so bright a Prospect, of the mighty the approaching Recompence.

For this short empty Pleasure, which now thou chusest for my Sake to decline, shall be compensated with solid and everlasting Joy in Heaven: And there thy largest Wishes shall be gratified. There shall be Plenty of every Thing that is good. Fruition perfect and secure, free from the least Allay of Fear, or Possibility of future Losses. Between thy Will and mine shall then be perfect Harmony; no Opposition there, no Obstruction; but every thing shall conspire to fulfill all thy Heart's Desire, and render thy Happiness as exquisite, as a Finite Nature is capable of. Thy present Ignominy, borne with Patience, shall there be paid with brighter Glory; thy Mourning Weeds exchanged for Robes

of Light and Joy; and he who sits here in the lowest Place, shall there be seated on an Eternal Throne. Let it not then be grievous to thee, to humble and submit thyself to the capricious Humours of Men, with whom thou conversest in this World; but rather so compose thy Mind, and order all thy Actions, as readily and meekly to comply with the Commands of thy Superiors, the Desires of thy Equals, the Requests of thy Inferiors, to do for all what lawfully thou mayest, and to endure patiently whatever they shall, but ought not, to do to thee. Let vain Men pursue Vanity, leave them to their own Methods. Let them place their Glory and Happiness in such Objects as their own mistaken Judgments shall determine them to. Let them admire, and above all Things covet celebrated Names, and popular Applause: But do thou place thy Excellence and Honour in the Contempt of thyself, thy Diligence in discharging my Commands, thy Zeal in seeking and advancing my Honour and Kingdom; and let this be first and chief in thy Desires, That *whether thou live, thou may'st live unto the Lord; or whether thou die, thou mayest die unto the Lord; so that whether by Life or Death, the Lord Jesus may be magnified in thy Body.*

Rom. xiv.

Phil. i. 20.

Chap. LV.

An Act of Resignation to God, in Time of Adversity.

Disciple.] Blessed be that Wisdom and Goodness, O holy Father, which performs all thy Will; for what thy Will decrees, cannot be otherwise than good and wise. Give me Grace, I beseech thee,

thee, to rejoice, not in myself, or any other, but in Thee alone; for thou art my only Hope and Crown, my Joy and Glory. All I have is received at thy bountiful Hand, bountiful to a most unworthy Creature, who neither could procure, nor deserve the least of all thy Mercies: And thou, by giving and completing, hast not lost thy Property and Right in all, which, by thy Means, I enjoy or do. For, what am I, alas! but a weak helpless Wretch? acquainted with Misery from my very Cradle, and wasted with Trouble and Vexation; my Face is grown old with Tears, and my Heart perplexed and broken with Doubts, and Sorrows, and vehement Passions. I beg and long most earnestly for the Blessing of Peace, that Peace and inward Consolation, which thy Children feed and feast upon. If thou shalt fill my Soul with this, it will overflow with Joy and Praise, and continually breathe out holy Hymns to the Honour of thy Name. But if thou turn away thy Face, as sometimes thou seest fit to do, I find myself unable to run in the Way of thy Commandments; and, prostrating myself in the Anguish of my Soul, I beat my Breast, and wring my Hands, for the Loss of that Light and Comfort, that Strength and Protection, which I enjoyed, while under the Shadow of thy Wings, and defended from the Assaults of Sorrow and Adversity.

Righteous Father, (then say I) the Time is come when thou art pleased to try me, but even at this Time, and at all others, praised be thy Name. Dearest Father, it is very meet, that now thou callest me to it, I should suffer in Obedience to thy Will. Most Honoured Father, this is the Hour, even that important Hour, which thou from all Eternity hast ordained, to be the Season of my outward Oppression and Discomfort, becoming the Instrument of endless Life and Joy to me: But tho' this Heaviness may endure for a Night, yet Light and Glory will return

in the Morning. This, holy Father, is thy own Appointment, and what thou willeſt thou never willeſt in vain. For even this Suffering in the preſent Life is a Mark of thy Favour and Friendſhip; the Returns, the Inſtruments, the Manner and Continuance of my Afflictions, are all of thy permitting; for nothing is or can be done, without thy Providence and Direction, without ſome wiſe and excellent Deſign. Even I myſelf am ſenſible, *how good it is for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn thy ſtatutes*, and utterly diſcard all Pride and carnal Confidences. The Shame and Self-reproach I laboured under, hath taught me to expect Relief from God, and not from Man. And all my Afflictions put me upon contemplating the unſearchable Depths of thy Providence, which, with a wonderful Temper of Juſtice and Equity, layeth theſe Burdens upon Bad and Good, without any nice or diſcriminating Marks of Love or Hatred in this preſent World.

Pſalm cxix.

I will therefore render the moſt unfeigned Thankſgiving to my God, for that in marvellous Kindneſs he hath not ſpared the Rod, when it was convenient for me: I acknowledge his Mercy, even in the Pains and Croſſes, and Sorrows I have endured, whether of Mind, or Body, or Eſtate; and yet much more, for thoſe Refreſhments and Remedies, which thou alone haſt afforded me. For vain is all the Help of Man; but thou art the true, the powerful Phyſician of Souls, thou *woundeſt and healeſt*; *thou bringeſt down to the Gates of Hell, and raiſeſt up again*. Thy Chaſtiſement ſhall teach me Wiſdom; thou ſhalt beat me with the Rod, and I ſhall not die. Behold me, Lord, moſt willingly ſubmitting to thy Diſcipline: O ſtrike and ſpare not, ſo thou bend my ſtubborn Heart, and bring down my high Spirit, and make me tractable and obedient. I, Lord, and Mine are at thy Diſpoſal, put forth thy Hand and touch them as thou pleaſeſt.

Deut. xxxii.

pleaſeſt. For this I know, that how grievous ſoever theſe temporal Croſſes may be, yet better it is to feel the Weight of thy Hand here, than hereafter. All Things are naked and open to thee, even the inmoſt Receſſes of our Hearts; thou knoweſt the Things that will be before they are; and needeſt not that any ſhould inform thee what is done upon Earth. Thou ſeeſt what will contribute moſt to my Improvement in Goodneſs; how great and good Effect Diſtreſſes have, to ſcour the Ruſt from our unactive Minds, and brighten all our Virtues. Take then, my God, thy own Meaſures; I only beg, that thou would'ſt not diſdain, and give me over, and think me unworthy thy Care, for thoſe Blemiſhes and Miſdemeanours of my Life, which none are better acquainted with, which none indeed are thoroughly acquainted with, but thou the Searcher of Hearts alone.

Work in me, I intreat thee, a true Amendment: Inſtruct me in all Things fit for me to know; Diſpoſe me to love all things worthy of my Affection; to think, that every Thing deſerves my Praiſe, in proportion as it pleaſes thee; to eſteem nothing highly, but what is precious and honourable in thy Sight; to look with a generous Diſdain upon all that thou thinkeſt vile, and never be reconciled to what thou hateſt. Let me not, I beſeech thee, judge by outward Appearances, the ſeeing of the Eye, or the hearing of the Ear, which are ſubject to infinite Deluſions and Miſtakes. But give me a right Judgment in all Things, whether they relate to this or another State, to the outward, or the inner Man: And, above all, let it be my ſpecial Care to inform myſelf in thy Will concerning me. Men, who form their Judgment upon Senſe, often err; Men who ſet their Affections upon the ſenſible Objects of this World, are frequently diſappointed and miſerable: For, is a Man, for Inſtance, one whit the better, becauſe he is grown great in other Men's

Eſteem? Is common Opinion the Standard of Merit? Nothing leſs. Here every Man abuſes his Fellow: The Cheat impoſes upon another as great a Cheat; the Vain puffs up the Vain; the Blind miſleads the Blind; the Weak ſupports the Weak; and all the while, by empty undeſerved Commendations, each brings a true Reproach upon the other, while he extols him againſt Senſe and Reaſon. For, after all, theſe Praiſes are but Words without any Significance? nothing more than Air and empty Sound; for every Man is juſt ſo much, ſo good, and neither more nor leſs, than he is in thy Eſteem only.

Chap. LVI.

A Man muſt be content with meaner Acts of Virtue, when he is indiſpoſed for greater.

Chriſt.] DO not ſuppoſe, my Son, that thy Zeal can always be equally bright, or thy Mind capable of Tranſport and intent Contemplation upon heavenly Objects at all Times. Thou carrieſt about with thee a Load of Infirmity and Corruption, which will often damp the cleareſt Flames of Devotion, darken thy Mind, and check its noble Flights; and make thee know and feel, that Mortal Fleſh and Blood is a heavy, but inſeparable, Incumbrance upon a Rational and Religious Soul. While Men are in the Body, there is no Remedy, but they muſt feel and groan under the Weight. And groan they ought indeed, when they conſider, how great an Interruption this is to their Attendance upon, and entire Dedication of their Time and Thoughts, to God and Heavenly Objects. Theſe they muſt be content to dwell upon as much as may be, by ſnatching all thoſe happy Inter-

Intervals, which Leisure and a good Temper of Mind allow them.

But when the Soul is indispoſed for nobler Exerciſes, when Cares and Infirmities preſs it down, let it not be unactive. Variety is here of Uſe, and Works of a meaner Rank in the Scale of Virtue muſt be recurred to, that thou may'ſt be ſtill employ'd, ſtill waiting for the happy Hour, when I ſhall return and viſit thee with larger Meaſures of my Grace. Bear with Meekneſs the preſent Diſcomfort and Incapacity, the dry and barren State of thy Soul, till I ſend my refreſhing Dews, and infuſe a Principle of Fruitfulneſs, for a Product in greater Plenty and Perfection. For I can ſoon make thee to forget thy paſt Troubles, and ſatisfy thy Mind with the Abundance of Peace. I will open for thee the ſpacious Plains of Scripture, that thou may'ſt be enlarged, and run the Way of my Commandments in Liberty, and with a Soul full of Joy and inward Exultation, ſay, *I reckon that the Sufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which ſhall be revealed in us.* Rom. viii.

Chap. LVII.

A Man ſhould think Correction, not Comfort, his Due.

Diſciple.] LORD, I muſt needs with Shame confeſs myſelf altogether unworthy thy Comforts, or any Part of that Care thou art pleaſed to take of my Soul; and therefore I have no Pretence to complain of hard Uſage, or Injuſtice, when thou withdraweſt thy Grace, and leaveſt me to myſelf. Whole Seas of Tears could not ſo cleanſe my polluted Soul,

as

as to render it pure enough to merit the bleſſed Influences of thy Spirit. Scourges and Vengeance are the Portion of a Wretch, who by ſo many and ſo grievous Tranſgreſſions hath offended thy Majeſty. The more therefore I reflect upon my own Sinfulneſs, the clearer and juſter Notions I have of thy free undeſerved Mercy. For merciful thou art, even to Aſtoniſhment, whoſe Bowels thus yearn over the Work of thy own Hands; who thus to all the World haſt manifeſted the Riches of thy Grace in the Veſſels of Mercy, and extendeſt thy Liberality to thoſe who have no Right to challenge, no Recommendation to induce thee to it.

But if we could pretend to Comforts, yet how could we expect ſuch divine, ſuch incomparable ſweet and noble Marks of thy Favour? ſo very unlike, ſo much above any human Helps or Encouragements? For how could I expect the Bread of Life from Heaven? Good Works I know of none I have to plead; but the ſlighteſt Recollection even amazes and confounds me with Sins innumerable brought to my Remembrance. My vehement Proneneſs to Evil, and ſhameful Sloth and Backwardneſs to Reformation and Goodneſs, are of themſelves ſo evident, that ſhould I labour to cloke them, the Attempt muſt needs be vain; for thou, the Searcher of Hearts, art privy to them; thou canſt diſprove me, and no Advocate is to be found, who could offer any Thing in my Vindication. What then can I juſtly lay claim to, but Hell and everlaſting Flames? I own with Grief and Shame, that Reproach and Contempt are my Due; and that I am unworthy to be named among thy Sons, or even thy meaneſt Servants. Nature indeed ſtarts back, and cannot, without Reluctancy, acknowledge its own Vileneſs and Guilt; but I will offer Violence to my native Pride, and freely confeſs my Sins, that thou mayſt ſhew thy Juſtice and Faithfulneſs,

neſs, in a full and free Pardon of the Faults I do freely confeſs.

But where ſhall I find Words fit for ſo miſerable a Condition, or how ſhall ſo ſcandalous a Creature apply to thee for Pardon; I know no other Terms than theſe that become my Mouth. "Lord, I have ſinned, I have "done wickedly. Mercy, thou Judge of Quick and "Dead, Mercy, or I periſh. Reſpite thy Sentence "yet a little while, and grant me ſome Time at leaſt "to bewail my Miſery, before I be ſwallowed up in "Darkneſs, and go into a Land black "with the Terrors of the Shadow of *Job* x. "Death. What other Reparation doſt thou expect? "What other can indeed be had from Men laden with "Guilt and Infirmity, than that they ſhould ſeriouſly "bewail and humble themſelves for their mighty and "manifold Provocations? Hence all our Hopes of "Remiſſion ſpring; here the firſt Seeds of a Reconciliation took Root, the Joy of a peaceful Conſcience "is ſown in Tears; the Acknowledgment of our "Weakneſs is the firſt Step towards repairing our "Loſs, the firſt Defence againſt the Wrath to come: "and in theſe melancholy Solitudes the gracious God "and penitent Soul meet and embrace each other. "A broken and a contrite Heart is re- *Pſal.* li. "puted a *Sacrifice*, and thou in marvelous Condeſcenſion preferreſt it before the Odours, "the ſweeteſt Incenſe, or whole Hecatombs of Burnt-Offerings. Of this that precious Ointment, whoſe "Perfumes, when it anointed thy holy Feet, filled "the whole Houſe, was an Emblem; for thou, Lord, "never didſt, or wilt deſpiſe a Soul afflicted with a "Senſe of Sin. Contrition and Humility are our "Sanctuary againſt the Rage and Malice of our ſpiritual Adverſary; the Tears of Penitence are that purifying Stream, which waſhes off the Stains and "Blemiſhes of our defiled Souls."

Chap.

Chap. LVIII.

The Grace of God dwells not with worldly-minded Men.

Christ. THE Tokens of my Love are of a nobler Kind, than that they ſhould ſubmit to be rival'd by the Bleſſings of this World; for heavenly Comforts diſdain to mix with thoſe of Earth. If then, my Son, thou deſireſt to be filled full of my Benediction and Grace, all that obſtructs its free Poſſeſſion of thy Heart muſt be effectually diſcarded. Covet Retirement, and prefer private Converſation with God before all the Diverſions of human Society. Eſteem no Company ſo delightful as thy Cloſet and thy Devotions, and there by fervent Prayers pour out thy Soul alone, that thy Zeal may be quicken'd, and thy Peace of Conſcience ſecured. Let the whole World be mean in thy Eſteem, and account it a greater Honour to be called and choſen of God, than any Advantages of Fortune or Advancement can confer. For be aſſured thy Soul cannot admit of two ſuch different Affections, as the Love of Me and tranſitory Pleaſures. The moſt intimate Acquaintance and deareſt Friends muſt not ſtand in Competition with Me; but they who will be mine in good earneſt, muſt follow the Apoſtle's Advice, and behave *themſelves as Strangers and Pilgrims in a World which muſt ſhortly be diſſolved.* And when the Time of this or their own Diſſolution approaches, the Joy and holy Truſt of that Mind, which ſits looſe to all here below, is more bleſſed than Words can expreſs.

1 *Pet.* iii.

But to live thus abſtracted and diſengaged from the World, is a Perfection not attainable by every common Man; nor can the ſenſual Perſon taſte the Delights, or enjoy the Liberty of a true ſpiritual State. For this requires

quires a Diſtance to be kept from all external Objects, that thoſe Things human Nature loves moſt tenderly ſhould be renounced; nay, even that himſelf ſhould be ſo; for each Man is his own worſt Enemy, and the moſt threatening Dangers riſe from within. He that hath gained an entire Conqueſt over himſelf, will find no mighty Difficulties to ſubdue all other Oppoſition; and this is a compleat Victory indeed. And when the ſenſual Appetite ſubmits readily to the rational Powers, and thoſe Powers again as readily ſubmit to my Will, this Man is Maſter of himſelf and all the World. But they who would aſpire to this Perfection, muſt ſet out with Reſolution, and early lay the Axe to the Root of the Tree; that no darling Sin, no corrupt or inordinate Affection may be left ſtanding. For all that Bitterneſs and Sin, which is neceſſary to be hewn down, in order to an entire Reformation and heavenly Purity of Heart and Life, are but ſo many Branches of that corrupt Stock, the irregular Love of a Man's own ſelf. And when that Stock is killed and cut down, profound Peace and uninterrupted Happineſs are the Conſequents of ſuch Mortification.

The only Reaſon why ſo many continue ſtill entangled in ſenſual Affections, and find themſelves unable to ſoar above themſelves and the Incumbrances here below, is, that very few have attained to the Skill of dying to their own Inclinations, and diveſting themſelves of narrow and ſelfiſh Deſigns. For he who affects to converſe freely with God, muſt firſt abandon all carnal and immoderate Deſires, and get looſe from thoſe Entanglements which clog and faſten down the Soul to Earth. They who will retain a Fondneſs of any created Being by minding temporal Things, ſhew that they are content to ſet up their Reſt ſhort of Heaven and God himſelf. *Set* therefore *thy Affections on things above, and not on things on the Earth; for no Man is ſufficient for the Service of two* *Coloſſ.* iii. 2.

Matth. vi. 24. *two Masters; nor canst thou love Me and Mammon both.*

Chap. LIX.

The different Motions of Nature and Grace.

Christ.] BE careful, my Son, to distinguish between Nature and Grace, and nicely to observe their different Tendencies and Prospects. For these are so very distant, so contrary to each other, and yet withal so intricate, that they require a spiritual and enlighten'd Understanding exactly to discern them. In the general Desire of Good all Mankind agree. This is the Spur and Spring of every Word and Action; but that which produces so very different Effects from the same original Cause, is, that Men often mistake Shadows for Substance, and are imposed upon by false Appearances of Good.

Nature acts craftily, allures, ensnares, cheats those that attend on her Wiles, and proposes the gratifying herself for the End of all she does. Grace deals candidly and sincerely, complies with no Evil, puts no Cheat upon Men, does all with Regard to God, and rests in him, as its supreme and only End. Nature declines Death and Sufferings, hates Trouble and Sorrow, Subjection and Obedience; Grace is exercised in perpetual Mortification and Self-denial, chuses to be over-ruled, to submit; nay, restrains even lawful and innocent Liberties; does not affect Dominion and Superiority, but chuses to live in a State of Humility and Subjection; and esteems no Hardship, no Compliance uneasy for the sake of God and a good Conscience. Nature is selfish, and always computes what Profit every Action may bring to the Person that does it; Grace overlooks all private Gain, and labours

labours chiefly to promote the publick Good. Nature delight in Honours and Preferments, in a celebrated Name, and the Commendation of Men; Grace aſcribes all the Honour and Praiſe to God, and thinks, that Things done well, are well rewarded by his Acceptance and Approbation. Nature dreads Ignominy and Contempt, but Grace accounts it Matter of great Joy to be expoſed and vilified in a good Cauſe. Nature is pleaſed with Eaſe, and Indulgence, and bodily Reſt; Grace is ever active, and undertakes Buſineſs and Toil with Chearfulneſs. Nature is charmed with Beauty and Curioſity, and diſdains Things that are mean, and vulgar, and common; Grace is delighted with ſuch as are plain and low in the Eſteem of the World, diſdains not thoſe that are unpalatable, nor thinks herſelf the worſe for the Want of outward Gaieties and Ornaments. Nature aims at tranſitory Enjoyments, is fond of Wealth and Increaſe, tenderly affected with Loſſes and Diſappointments, and provoked to the laſt Degree with Inſolence and Reproach; Grace keeps eternal Advantages in View, neglects the fading and periſhing; bears Loſſes with Evenneſs of Temper, endures Contempt and Scandal patiently. For theſe ſhe conſiders are Things of no mighty Concern, to one whoſe Heart and Treaſure are in Heaven, a Place where they are ſafe, and no Misfortune can reach them. Nature is niggardly and griping, and chuſes rather to receive than give; Grace bountiful and kind, deſpiſing ſordid Gain and Parſimony, content with a little, diſtributes liberally and chearfully, and eſteems *it more bleſſed to give than to receive.* Acts xx.

Nature inclines to Creature-Comforts, to fleſhly Delights, to worldly Vanities and Pomps, to wandering and idle Diverſions; Grace fixes the Heart upon God and Goodneſs, concerns itſelf with the World as little as may be, hates fleſhly Luſts; checks and confines roving Imaginations, and affects Privacy and

Solitude. Nature is much delighted with ſenſual Pleaſures; Grace feels no Pleaſure but in God alone, and prefers that before all the Delights that the Objects of Senſe can afford. Nature does nothing without ſome Proſpect of Intereſt, and for every Kindneſs expects as good or better Returns, either of Things in Kind, or at leaſt of Favour and Applauſe for its pretended Generoſity, and ſets a very high Value upon all the Obligations it lays; Grace deſires no Recompence in this World, but looks upon God as her Reward; nor are the Supplies and Conveniencies of Life any farther of Conſideration with her, than as a comfortable Subſiſtance in this World may be ſerviceable in promoting and facilitating the Endeavours after another.

Nature values herſelf upon a diffuſive Intereſt, and Multitude of Relations and Friends, Quality and noble Blood, and therefore fawns upon or favours Men in Power, courts and careſſes the Rich, commends, and is partial to Perſons of the ſame Condition, or Opinion, or Party; Grace is charitable and kind even to Enemies, is not exalted by great or numerous Friendſhips, and thinks the Deſcent and Family of a Man a very deſpicable Thing, unleſs his Virtue be as much more eminent than thoſe of his Inferiors, as his Birth and Rank is above theirs. Grace favours the Poor rather than the Rich, and is more concerned for the hard Fortune of an innocent Perſon, than of a great one; pays its Reſpects to true intrinſick Worth, not to the mere Signs and Trappings of it, which often only ſhew where it ought to be, not where it really is; encourages the Good in Virtue, inſtead of flattering and ſoothing up the Mighty in their Wickedneſs and Folly, and labours indefatigably to conform thoſe who profeſs themſelves God's Children, to the Likeneſs of their heavenly Father's Excellencies, by propagating all Manner of Piety and Goodneſs.

Nature is easily provoked to Discontent by hard Circumstances; Grace bears Want and Poverty with Meekness and much Patience. Nature's Ends and Designs constantly center in herself; but Grace considers her Original, and thinks that all should return thither from whence at first it came, arrogates nothing to itself, is not assuming, does not contend for Praise or Preference, is not dogmatical and peremptory in her own Opinions, but in all Searches after Truth, submits her own Reason and Judgment to the incomprehensible Wisdom of God. Nature affects to be knowing, to understand and penetrate the profoundest and darkest Mysteries, makes Ostentation of all her new Discoveries, and pretends to Experiment and Demonstration, labours to distinguish herself, to be thought wiser than the rest of the World, and would be extolled and admired for all that is spoken, or written, or done: Grace thinks it is not advisable to lay out Time or Thought upon new or unprofitable Curiosities, but considers that the Ruin of Mankind is owing to that busy desire of knowing what God thought fit to conceal from them; that this inquisitive, pretending Temper, is a Sprout from that old Root of Bitterness; that establish'd Truths may be depended upon, but new and fanciful Notions are almost no sooner entertained, than they are disproved and exploded again; that Men should therefore check that vain Pleasure, which tickles their itching Minds upon these Occasions; abandon Vain-glory, labour rather to conceal, than to publish their Advantages; and make Usefulness, and Virtue, and God's Honour, the only End of all their Knowledge and Studies. For to him alone all Thanks and Praise must of necessity be due, who gives Men all they have of his own mere Motion and free Mercy.

And such is Grace; a Light superior to Nature, which should direct and preside over it; the peculiar

Gift of God; the distinguishing Character of his Chosen; the sure Pledge of everlasting Salvation; for it raises a Man's Affections from Earth to Heaven, and changes him from Flesh to Spirit. And because these two Principles are acted by such different Motives, proceed in such different Methods, and pursue such differing Ends; therefore, in Proportion as Nature is weaken'd and subdu'd, the larger Measures of Grace are imparted, the more Mens Virtues are improved, and the glorious Image of God renewed in their Hearts by holy and heavenly Dispositions.

Chap. LX.

The Weakness of corrupt Nature, and Efficacy of divine Grace.

Disciple. THOU hast indeed, my God, created me in thy own Image, after thy Likeness, and commanded *me to be holy, as thou thyself art holy.* O grant me, I beseech thee, that Favour and Assistance, which thy own Word hath taught me is so important, so absolutely necessary to Salvation, that I may vanquish my own Nature, whose Inclinations are now so degenerate, so corrupt, that they have a strong and constant Tendency to Sin and Death. For I feel and lament a *Law of Sin in my Body, warring continually against the Law of my Mind,* drawing me to compliance with the fleshy and sensual Appetite, and disabling me from any resolute Resistance against its fatal Motions, except thy divine Grace pour in fresh Succours, and help me to stand in the Day of Battle. Lord, I have need, not only of thy Grace, but of very plentiful and powerful Communications of it, to turn

Gen. i. 14. 1 *Pet.* i. *Rom.* vii.

turn the Biaſs of Nature, which from my very Infancy preponderates to Evil. For this Infection is derived from the firſt Parent of Mankind, and is the Puniſhment of his Offence diffuſed upon his whole Poſterity ſo that the human Nature, which came pure and good out of thy creating Hand, is tainted and perverted, and all the Motions now remaining draw the wrong way, and bend to Sin and Earth.

The little Power left in us to do good, is like a very ſmall Spark covered with a huge Heap of Embers; Light of Reaſon clouded with a thick noiſome Miſt of Darkneſs and Error. And tho' by this all the Diſtinctions of Good and Evil, of Truth and Falſhood, are not utterly loſt, yet the Power of performing what our better Senſe approves, is gone; the Light of Truth is dim and feeble, and the Integrity of our Minds and Affections is blemiſh'd, and diverted from attending to it impartially. Hence it comes to paſs, that though ſometimes I am delighted with thy Law in the inner Man, and fully convinced that *thy Commandment is holy, and juſt, and good*, condemning Wickedneſs, and warning me of the Rocks and Precipices which, in ſteering my Courſe through the Waves of this troubleſome World, I muſt be watchful to avoid; yet ſtill with *the Fleſh I ſerve the Law of Sin*, and find a greater Diſpoſition to follow Luſt and Senſe, than to be governed by Reaſon and Religion. Hence I ſo often feel the *Will to do well*, but *how to perform what I thus will, I find not.* Hence I often make and repeat good Reſolutions with great Sincerity; but for want of thy Aſſiſtance to counterpoſe my Infirmities, quickly fall from my Stedfaſtneſs, and am beaten off with the very Approach of Difficulty and Oppoſition. Hence I diſcern the Way I ſhould walk in; but when I am inform'd of my Duty, and endeavour to raiſe myſelf above the World and its Temptations, a fatal innate Weight draws

Rom. vii.

draws me down again, and checks my Soul in its intended Flights to Heaven and thee.

How abſolutely needful then, my God, is thy Grace to help me in beginning, in carrying on, in accompliſhing every good Work; ſince without it I can do nothing, and yet with it can do even all things? yet not I, Lord, but thou, who art in me, and ſtrengtheneſt me. O Gift truly divine! without which no Deſert of Man, no Endowments or Qualifications of Neture are of any Worth or Significance at all! Sciences and Arts, Riches and Power, Beauty and Strength, Wit and Eloquence, what are they, Lord, or what to be accounted of, if not ſeconded, aſſiſted, exalted, perfected by Grace? theſe are Accompliſhments diſtributed promiſcuouſly to Good and Bad; but Grace is a Gift peculiar to thy Children and Choſen, and ſuch as renders the happy Men that have it worthy of eternal Life and Happineſs. A Gift ſo ſingularly excellent that neither the Gift of Prophecy, nor the Power of working Miracles, nor the underſtanding of ſublimeſt and moſt abſtruſe Myſteries, nor Faith, nor Hope, nor any other Virtue or Privilege, can recommend us to God without it.

O bleſſed Efficacy of Grace, which makes the poor in Spirit rich in Virtue and good Works; and that Men ſo enrich'd, humble and poor in Spirit! Come, heavenly Gift, deſcend from above, ſhed thyſelf into my Soul, and fill every dark Corner there with Light and Comfort; rouze and ſhake off my Sloth, moiſten the dry Soil, and command Fruitfulneſs out of that barren Ground. Vouchſafe me, Lord, this Bleſſing; for this alone is ſufficient for me, though thou ſhouldſt think fit to deny or withdraw all that Nature can either beſtow, or is moſt fond of acquiring. Give me but this Defence, and no Temptation ſhall confound me, no Calamity diſmay or make me afraid. For this alone is Strength and Courage, Wiſdom and

Protection; ſtronger than all my Enemies, and wiſer than all human Counſels and Contrivances; the Teacher of Truth, the Miſtreſs of holy Diſcipline, the Light of the Soul, the Solace of Troubles, the Reſolver of Doubts; the Balm of my Wounds, the Diſpeller of Melancholy, the Baniſher of Fear, the Cheriſher of Devotion, the Parent of Contrition, the Spring of holy Tears, and of all thoſe Streams that waſh and purge polluted Conſciences. What am I without this, but dry Stubble, a rotten Trunk, dead to good Works, uſeleſs and unprofitable, and fit for nothing but to be trodden under Foot, and caſt into the Fire? Let therefore, O my God, I moſt humbly and heartily intreat, O let this Grace and Favour of thine *always prevent and follow me, and make me continually to be given to all good Works, that in all my Actions begun, continued and ended in thee, I may glorify thy holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain everlaſting Life.* Amen, Amen.

Collect for xvii. Sunday after *Trinity*.

Collect after Communion.

CHAP. LXI.

Self-denial enforced from Chriſt's Example.

Chriſt.] THE more, my Son, thou forſakeſt thyſelf, the nearer Approaches thou makeſt toward Me. As the Deſires and intemperate Love of Things without muſt be diſcarded, in order to the Peace of one's own Breaſt; ſo even the Love of one's own ſelf muſt be laid aſide, in order to a perfect Union with God. Learn therefore abſolutely to deny thy own Will for mine, without Contradiction or Complaint. Follow Me, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* Without the Way can be no walking; with-

out the Truth no Knowledge; without the Life no Living. Keep then in this Way, for it is unalterable; believe in this Truth, for it is infallible; hope for, and aspire to this Life, for it is true, happy, and eternal Life. Continue in my Way, and thou shalt know the Truth, and the Truth shall make thee free, that thou mayest inherit everlasting Life.

Matth. xix. *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* If thou wilt know the Truth, believe my Words. If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast. If thou wilt save thy Life hereafter, despise it here. If thou wilt be exalted in Heaven, abase thyself upon Earth. If thou desire to reign with me, take up the Cross with me. For none but they who imitate my Cross, are in the right Way to Happiness and true Glory.

Disciple.] This Way, O Lord, is strait and rugged, such as the World declines, and cannot endure to think of. Therefore I beg thy Grace would enable me to despise the World, and dissent from the general Opinion of Men, in compliance with thy Command and Example. *For the Servant is not greater than his Lord, nor the Disciple above his Master.* Let thy Servant then be guided in thy Steps, for with thee is Life and true Holiness. And all I read or hear from any other Hand, gives me no Refreshment, no true Delight.

John xv.

Christ.] *If thou knowest these things, my Son, happy art thou if thou do them.* For Practice, and not Knowledge, shall inherit the Blessing.

John xiii.

John xiv. *He that keepeth my Commandments, and doth them, he it is that loveth me, and I will love him* in return, *and manifest myself to him*, and set him upon a Throne with me in my Father's Kingdom.

Disciple.] Lord, make me a Partaker of this gracious Promise. The Cross which I have received from thy Hand, I will bear with Constancy even unto Death.

The

The Life of a true Christian is indeed one continued Cross, but since this is the Way that leads to Paradise, it is by no means fit that I should depart from it, or repent of my holy Resolutions and good Beginnings.

Come then, my Christian Brethren, let us advance boldly, Courage, for Christ is with us; he does not only lead us on, but will enable us to follow him. For his sake we have taken up the Cross, and for his sake we must persevere in bearing it. Behold, the King and Captain of our Salvation marches at our Head, ready to fight our Battles. Let us, like gallant Soldiers, follow; let us abandon our Fears, and manfully prepare to die in the Field; and not stain our Honour, and lose our Crown, by flinching from that Service, and those Hardships which he hath made our Duty and our Glory.

Chap. LXII.

Against being dejected with Temptations.

Christ.] JUDGE not, my Son of thy Favour and Acceptance with God by such false Measures, as the Warmth of thy Devotion, and the Delight which results from the Discharge of thy Duty, For I am better pleased with Humility and Patience, and deep Contrition of Heart in a disconsolate and afflicted State, than with an eager Zeal, and the most exalted Acts of an easy and prosperous Piety. And whence is it, dost thou think, that every little Scandal, which detracts from thy Reputation, so sensibly affects thee? Were it yet more to thy Disparagement, yet could it not be worth thy Concern. This is not the first Injury of this kind, nor is it like

to be the laſt, if thou live longer among Men. And what is not new or ſtrange, ought not to ſurprize thee. I know thy Courage and pretended Bravery, while Danger keeps its diſtance. Thou canſt diſcourſe like a Philoſopher and a Chriſtian, and give excellent Advice to thy Friends when they labour under any Diſtreſs; but when their Caſe happens to be thy own, and ſome unexpected Calamity comes home to thee, thy Prudence, and Reſolution forſake thee quite, and thou ſtandeſt no leſs in need of the Counſel and Support, which thou wert wont ſo freely to impart to others heretofore.

Let this Experiment remind thee of thy own Frailty, which, by ſuch Inſtances, appears not to be Proof againſt the ſlighteſt Misfortunes. For even theſe Inſtances are greatly for thy Advantage, and bring thee to a right and perfect underſtanding of thy own Condition. Grow wiſer at leaſt at thy own Expence; and as thy calmer Reaſon ſhews they ought to be, ſo let thy Behaviour manifeſt, that theſe tender Reſentments of temporal Evils are baniſhed out of thy Mind. If thou canſt not entertain Adverſity with abſolute Indifference, yet let it not drive thee to Deſpondency and wicked Diſtruſt; and however the firſt Onſet may diſturb thee, yet rally quickly, and let it not long overpower thee. And tho' perhaps thou art not arrived to that Perfection *of counting it all Joy when thou falleſt into divers Temptations*, thou canſt not be excuſed from undergoing them with Meekneſs, and Reſignation, and Patience. If thou art not yet got even thus far, but ſome indecent Reflections riſe up in thy Mind, yet let not this ſecret Indignation break out into irreverent Expreſſions, but *ſet a watch upon thy tongue, and keep the door of thy lips*, Reſolve at leaſt that *thy Mouth ſhall not offend*; and tho' thy Heart be hot within thee, yet let not any paſſionate Complaints burſt out,

James i.

Pſal. cxli, & xxxix.

out, which may caſt Imputations upon the Honour of God, impeach the Juſtice and Goodneſs of Providence, or give Offence to thy weaker Brethren. For, by thus manning and guarding well the Outworks, thy inward Commotions will in time be compoſed; thy Sorrow by degrees ſhall turn into Joy, and the Favour and Mercy of God be inclined to relieve and comfort thee, in recompence to thy Reverence and Submiſſion to his good Pleaſure.

As I live, ſaith the Lord, I will help thee ſpeedily, and comfort them who earneſtly ſeek me, who put their truſt in my Salvation. Call up thy Chriſtian Fortitude, and ſink not under thy Burthen, but prepare for greater Trials. If thy former Troubles have overwhelmed thy Spirits, prevailed over thy Temper and thy Virtue; let not the Remembrance of your former Trials diſcourage thee. *The Lord knoweth whereof thou art made, he remembereth that thou art but Duſt:* *Pſal.* ciii. A Man, and not God; Fleſh, and not Angel, or unbodied Spirit; How canſt thou then expect to continue in an undiſturb'd State of Goodneſs? How ſhould thy Virtue be above the ſhocks and ſhakings of Temptation, when even the Angels kept not their firſt Eſtate, and Man in Paradiſe ſo ſoon fell from Innocence? I am thy ſole Protection, who raiſe the Souls dejected with Sorrow, preſerve thoſe who acknowledge and bewail their own Weakneſs, and glorify with myſelf the humble Chriſtians, who are aſhamed of their Follies and Miſcarriages.

Diſciple.] Bleſſed be thy Mercy, for the gracious Words, which drop from thy Mouth, ſoft as the gentle Dew, and ſweeter than Honey and the Honey-comb. What would become of me, in the Extremity of my Diſtreſs and Anguiſh of my Soul, did not thy Promiſes and ſeaſonable Inſtructions refreſh and comfort me? But be it as thou wilt; for I cannot think it any great matter, how long or boiſterous my Voyage is, ſo thou

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at last conduct me safe to that peaceful Heaven, where good Men are at rest. Let my Afflictions be ever so great, so thou grant a happy Issue, and turn my Sufferings to good effect. Be my Condition in this Life Adverse or Prosperous, no Prosperity will profit, no Adversity harm me, but in Proportion to the State in which I die. And if I go well out of the World, my Continuance in it cannot be so troublesome, that I should have cause to repent or complain. Order my Affairs then as thou pleasest; but always, O my God, remember me for good. Lead me in the right and ready way to thy Kingdom, dispose my every Action towards the Attainment of Salvation, and *let me so pass through things Temporal, that I finally lose not the things Eternal.* Amen.

Chap. LXIII.

Against Prying into Things too high for us, and pretending to fathom the Depths of God and Providence.

Christ.] Do not, my Son, take upon thee to dispute, or determine any thing concerning abstruse and difficult Points; nor too curiously enquire into those mysterious Dispensations, which God hath purposely concealed from thee. Concern not thyself about the amazing Distributions of Grace or Providence; why one Man is forsaken and in Disfavour with God, another so surprizingly indulged by him; This Person exercised with Afflictions and Sorrows, or that so gently dealt with, so unaccountably exalted. These are things out of thy Sphere: And all the Parts and Penetration, the acutest Wit, and acquired Improvements of Man, are much too short

ſhort and feeble, to enter into the Reaſons of the Divine Counſels. If therefore ſuch Curioſities return upon thee, look upon them as the Suggeſtions of the Devil, by which he labours to diſquiet and unſettle thee. If Men, impertinently buſy, require a Solution of ſuch Difficulties, content thyſelf with that general Anſwer of the Prophet: *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and juſt are thy Judgments*; *The Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether*; *His Righteouſneſs ſtandeth like the ſtrong Mountain*, fix'd and immoveable, eminent and conſpicuous; And *his Judgments are like the great Deep:* A vaſt and dark Abyſs, ſuch as we cannot ſee to the bottom of, or fathom with the ſhort Line of a Finite Underſtanding.

Jer. xii. 1. *Pſal.* xix. *Pſal.* xxxvi. 7.

My Methods and Dealings are to be admired and had in reverence, not faucily criticized upon, by my own Creatures. For no Creature can have a Capacity proportioned to them; and what Men cannot comprehend, they ſhould not preſume to take into Examination.

As little ought they to enquire and diſpute concerning the Merits or the Preference of Good Men: Which of the Saints excels in Virtue, or is greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven. For theſe are Queſtions, in which Men are no ways concerned, ſuch as engender Strife and Debate, and turn to no good Account. They cheriſh Arrogance and Pride, Envy and Faction, while Men break into Parties, and each contends for the Pre-eminence of Him, whoſe Order and Patronage he is devoted to, or whom his own Vain Imagination inclines him moſt to honour. The effect of this is very viſible, and the Miſchiefs, that ſpring from ſuch an impertinent Zeal, exceeding numerous and lamentable: The Controverſy, neither poſſible to be decided, nor worth deciding, if it were. And, if thoſe Saints have any Knowledge of what paſſes here below, this indiſcreet and

and partial Zeal cannot but be highly displeasing to them. For I am not a God of Contention and Faction, but of Order, and Peace, and Love. And these are the genuine Products of true Modesty and Humility, such as esteems others better than itself; but inconsistent with that bold assuming Temper, which is restless and discontented, if any other be preferred before it. It may be, Affection and honest Zeal may dispose some Men to be more liberal in their Respect on this or that side of the differing Parties; but, do not such consider, that such Affection is not the effect of Grace or Religion, but merely of Human Infirmity? These are such Prepossessions as I can never be capable of; for all the Saints are equally mine. My Hand made them Men, my Assisting Grace made them Saints; I enriched them with Virtues, and crowned them all with Glory. I know what each have done, what Occasions they had, what Improvements they made. I foreknew them before Time was; they chose not Me, but I them; and singled them out of the Common Crowd. I drew them with the Cords of Love and Mercy, conducted them thro' great Variety of Trials and Afflictions; sustain'd them with uncommon Comforts and Recruits, enabled them to persevere, and rewarded the Constancy myself had given. I know the first and last; and my fatherly, my inexpressible Affection extends to them all. For all are Instruments of my Praise and Glory, so many Monuments and Eternal Trophies of my Goodness; freely advanced to what they are, by my Bounty and Favour, without any Right or antecedent Merit of their own. He therefore, who despises the least of these, is guilty of Disrespect to the greatest; for this Contempt reflects at last on Me, the Author of their Virtues and their Happiness; and therefore in Me alone should all the Honour, pretended to be paid to Them, centre. Their Interests and Properties are no longer separate; for Charity hath made

made them One, and knit them into the same Mystical Body, whose Honours, and Advantages, and Inclinations, and Joys, are inseparably the same. Nay, which is the utmost Perfection of Charity, they all conspire in loving Me more than themselves, or any Merits or Respects of their own; for, being in that happy State exalted above themselves, they are entirely taken up with the Love and Honour of God. This is their Happiness and utmost End. Nothing can divert them to meaner Prospects, no mixture of Self comes in betwixt, to damp the pure Flames of this everlasting Love.

Away then with these vain Curiosities, these eager Disputes, concerning the Condition of the Blessed; which betray a Prevalence of Carnal and Sensual Appetites, such as have no Notions higher than particular Gains and separate Interests. Nature and Partiality incline such Dispositions, to Act, and Desire, and Love, and Hate, upon private and personal Considerations; and then they fondly transfer the same Ideas and the same Behaviour, from Earthly to Heavenly Objects. Alas! The difference is the wildest in the World, and nothing in Nature so distant, as the silly Imaginations of such Novices in Matters of another World, from those juster Apprehensions, which Minds, enlightned from above, entertain upon these Occasions. Be not too curious then, my Son, in Matters above thy Capacity; but rather let it be thy Care and constant Thought, how thou may'st be found, tho' it be but the least, in the Kingdom of Heaven. For couldst thou understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge; couldst thou distinctly view the several Orders and Places of each Angel and Spirit above; yet what would this avail, farther than as it excited in thee less for thy Own, and greater Zeal for my Honour? The Man, who seriously reflects upon the Multitude of his own Sins, and the Defects and Worthlesness of his own Virtues, how few, how poor, how far short they are

of

of the Perfection of thoſe bright Examples heretofore, employs his Mind upon a Subject, which God likes much better than ſuch empty Speculations of them who have ſet thoſe Examples.

This is a Controverſy, which they themſelves never trouble themſelves about. For they aſcribe nothing to any Deſerts of their own, but acknowledge the whole of what they have and are, to be the ſole Effect of my infinite Liberality and Love. And their Happineſs aad Honour is compleat, by the Joy they take in the Fruition of God and his Glory. The more exalted any of theſe are, the more modeſt they are; the more dear, and the more like to me. Thus much is intimated by that Viſion, where they are ſaid to *caſt their Crowns at the Feet of God, and falling down upon their Faces before the Throne, and before the Lamb to worſhip him that liveth for ever and ever.*

Rev. x.

How abſurd is it to ſee Men zealouſly contending who is greateſt in the Kingdom of God, who are not ſolicitous in the mean while to know, what much more nearly concerns them, whether they ſhall have any place at all there themſelves? And yet to be leaſt there is to be great, for even the leaſt are Sons and Heirs of God. *A little one ſhall become a thouſand, and the Child ſhall die an hundred Years old, but the Sinner of an hundred Years old ſhall be accurſed.* When the Diſciples enquired who ſhould be the greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven, this was the Anſwer made to that Demand: *Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye ſhall in no wiſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore whoſoever ſhall humble himſelf as this little Child, the ſame ſhall be greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven.* Woe to them who diſdain to imitate the Humility and Meekneſs of little Children; for ſtrait and low is the Gate of Heaven, ſuch as the towrings of Ambition, and

Pſal. lx. 22. —— lxv. 20.

Matth. xviii.

and swellings of bloated Vanity can never stoop to, or enter at. Woe to the Rich, who have their Consolation in this World; for while the Poor are admitted into Paradise, they shall stand Weeping and Wailing without. But rejoice, ye Meek and Humble, and Poor, for Yours is the Kingdom of God; if ye heartily embrace and obey the Truth, and be Rich in Patience and good Dispositions.

Chap. LXIV.

God is all the Good Man's Hope and Confidence.

Disciple.] In whom, O Lord, is my Hope, while here below? or what, of all the Things under Heaven, can minister Peace and Comfort to my Soul? *Truly my Hope is even in Thee*, and my Joy and Trust in thy Mercy alone. When were my Affairs in ill Condition with thee? Or what can prevent my being exquisitely miserable without thee? Poverty for thy sake is infinitely rather to be chosen, than all the Riches and Greatness in the World, in Exchange for thy Favour; and Earth and Exile with that Favour more blissful, than Heaven without the Fruition of Thee. For Heaven is Heaven by thy blessed Presence; and where that does not reside, all is Death and the Grave, and Hell. Thou art my Desire and my Portion, and therefore to thee my Sighs and Groans, and Cries and Prayers, continually ascend. I have no other Stay or Refuge, who can send seasonable and suitable Relief to all my Dangers and Necessities; but thou alone art my Hope and Trust, my effectual Comforter, and faithful Friend.

Others pursue their own private Ends and Advantages, but thou seekest my Improvement and Happiness,

pineſs; and ordereſt all things for my Good. Even my Temptations and Afflictions are appointed to do me Service. Theſe are the Methods, by which the Fidelity of thy Choſen is brought to the Teſt; and even the harſher Diſpenſations ought as much to engage my Affections, and excite my Gratitude and Praiſe, as the brighteſt Comforts, and moſt deſired Proſperity. In Thee therefore, O my God, I reſt my Soul; Thou art my Sanctuary, where I depoſite the Burthen of all my Griefs and Troubles. For there alone can They and I be ſafe, ſince all things elſe are feeble and uncertain, neither able, nor always diſpoſed, to comfort or protect me. Friends cannot do what they wiſh; Great Men will not or cannot help; the Wiſe, without Thee, miſtake their Meaſures; Books are but inſignificant Diverſion, and yield no ſolid Conſolation; Wealth cannot buy Eaſe and Peace of Mind; Fortreſſes and Coverts cannot hide me from Calamity, unleſs thou be with thoſe Friends, and ſtrengthen thoſe great Men, and direct thoſe Counſellors, and inſtruct me by thoſe Books, and aſſiſt me in the uſe of Wealth, and guard that ſtrong Retreat. For Peace and Happineſs are entirely in Thee, Thou art the End, the Sum, the Source of all Good; the Perfection of Life, the Depth of Wiſdom and Knowledge: And Hope in Thee is the ſureſt, the moſt ſenſible Support thy Servants can have, in the Miſeries of this mortal Life.

To Thee therefore lift I up my Eyes, O Father of Mercies and Lover of Men. Comfort my Soul in Trouble, and purify it with thy Grace, that it may be a clean and holy Habitation, ſuch as thy glorious Majeſty does not diſdain to dwell in. Let no Impurity be left in this Temple; but purge it thoroughly from every thing, which may offend thoſe Eyes, that cannot behold Iniquity or Uncleanneſs. Look upon me in thy great Goodneſs, and, after the Multitude of thy Mercies, hear the Prayer of thy poor Servant, now wan-

wandring in a distant and desolate Wilderness. O keep my Soul, and deliver me, lead me safe thro' this Vale of Sorrow and Danger, and conduct me by the Way of Peace and Holiness to my own Home, even my heavenly Country, the Land of Promise, the Presence and eternal Fruition of my God!

The End of the third BOOK.

OF THE IMITATION OF Jesus Christ.

The Fourth Book. *Of the Lord's Supper.*

Chap. I.

The Reverence due to this holy Sacrament.

The Invitation.

Christ.] "COME unto me all ye "that labour and are "heavy laden, and I "will refresh you. *Matt.* xi. 28.
"The Bread that I will give is my Flesh, "which I will give for the Life of the "World. Take, eat, this is my Body, "which is given for you: This do in re- "membrance of me. He that eateth my "Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, dwel- "leth in me, and I in him. The Words *John* vi. 51. 1 *Cor.* ix. 24. *John* vi. 56. ——— 63.

" which I ſpeak unto you, they are Spirit, and they " are Life."

Diſciple.] Theſe, bleſſed Jeſus, are thy Words, on which my Soul ſecurely reſts itſelf, becauſe my Saviour, who is eternal Truth, hath ſpoken them. Theſe the gracious and condeſcending Invitations, which I find ſcattered in holy Scripture, as Occaſions offered for making them. Theſe therefore I will receive with holy Gratitude, with humble, but entire Confidence, and grave them upon my Soul in deep and indelible Characters. For tho' they be thine, as the Author, yet do I claim a Property in them, and juſtly call them mine to, as a Perſon for whoſe Benefit and Salvation thou wert pleaſed to utter them. Moſt gladly therefore will I receive them at thy Mouth, that the Authority of the divine Speaker may make the more effectual Impreſſion. And ſtupid I muſt be beyond Imagination, if Encouragement ſo ſweet, ſo kind, do not awaken and very ſenſibly affect me. But alas! at the ſame time that thy Call inclines me to come, my own grievous Tranſgreſſions fly in my Face, and the Terrors of a guilty Conſcience keep me away. Thy Goodneſs, I own, imps my Wings, and bids me boldly attempt the raiſing my Soul to Heaven and Happineſs; but I feel the bitter Remembrance of my Sins checking thoſe Flights, laying me proſtrate upon Earth, reproaching my better Hopes and nobler Intentions with Preſumption, and ever weighing down my Mind with the intolerable Burthen of heinous numberleſs Offences, which render me unworthy the leaſt of all thy Mercies.

In this Perplexity of Thought thou haſt moſt ſeaſonably interpoſed with thy reviving Comforts, haſt made that Faith and Truſt a Virtue and a Duty, which I ſhould have ſhunned as a Crime; and conſcious of my own Vileneſs, durſt not have entertained. Thou bidſt me raiſe my dejected Looks, and direct my Steps

to

to Heaven; and I ſeriouſly deſire (as who indeed can but deſire?) Life and Glory. Thou exhorteſt me to begin to live immediately, by taking the ſweet Foretaſtes of Immortality in that Bread which is the Food of Souls. Thy kind Invitation therefore I greedily attend to, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refreſh you.* O charming Sound in the Ears of a Sinner! How joyful is the News to a poor, loſt, impotent Wretch! One, who in a due Senſe of his own Vileneſs, thinks even the meanneſt of thy Gifts, which conduce to his bodily Suſtenance, too good for him! To be invited to eat of thy moſt bleſſed Body, and admitted to partake of the lively Figures of thy divine Blood, the Commemorations of thy Death, and ſure Pledges of Salvation! Lord, what am I, that I ſhould thus be ſuffered to approach thee! Nay rather, that thou ſhouldſt come to me, and dwell under my Roof! O unſpeakable Condeſcenſion! O unexampled Kindneſs! Behold, the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain thee! and yet thou vouchſafeſt to take up thy Abode with Man, that is a Worm! The Angels are not pure in thy Sight, and yet thou ſayeſt to wretched Sinners, *Come unto me, ye that travel, and are heavy laden.*

I find myſelf at a loſs whence ſuch aſtoniſhing Kindneſs ſhould proceed, or what may be the meaning of ſo friendly an Invitation. My Miſdeeds teſtify againſt me, and I am but too ſenſible that no Merit of mine could induce my Lord to make it. So far from that, that even now it is made, I know not with what Face I can either approach my God and Saviour, or bring him to me, or hope to keep him there; him, whom I have ſo often, ſo grievouſly provoked, ſo juſtly made my Enemy for ever. But were there no Demerits of my own to diſcourage this Attempt, yet, who am I, that the Majeſty of Heaven and Earth ſhould ſtoop ſo low as to enter under my Roof! Be-

hold, Angels and Archangels, Principalities and Powers fall down and worſhip thee! Behold, the brighteſt Saints, and Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, tremble at thy Preſence! and yet thou ſayeſt, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden.* Had this been ſpoke by any Mouth but thine, Men could not have believed it. Had not thy own Command inſpired this Confidence, Sinners durſt not have attempted to move towards thee, but would have rather uſed their utmoſt Induſtry to flee from the Preſence of their Maſter and Judge. But be it ſo, we are commanded to come to thee; and thou vouchſafeſt to come to us. Yet what Solemnity, what Preparation, can be ſufficient for thy Reception? *Noah*, that righteous Perſon, employed a hundred Years in building an Ark by God's Direction, for the ſaving himſelf and a very few Souls beſides; and how ſhall I be qualified, by the Application of an Hour or two only, to entertain the Maker of the Univerſe, and meet him with that humble Reverence, which is due to ſo terrible, ſo glorious a Creator, from the vileſt and moſt unworthy of all his Creatures? Thy Servant *Moſes*, admitted into familiar Converſation with thee, by a Privilege not imparted to the reſt of Mankind, framed an Ark of Cedar-wood, and overlaid it with pure Gold, to be a fit Repoſitory for the Tables of the Law; and ſhall I, wretched rotten Trunk, take upon me, without Ceremony, to receive the Almighty Maker and Giver of that Law? *Solomon*, the wiſeſt of Princes, ſpent Seven Years in building a magnificent Temple to the Honour of thy Name; Eight Days were taken up in the Dedication of it; a Thouſand Peace-Offerings were then ſacrificed upon the new-erected Altars; and the Ark of the Covenant with Sound of Trumpet, and much other holy Pomp, was conducted into the Place appointed to receive it: And how unlike to theſe great Saints am I, Duſt and Aſhes, chief of

of Sinners, and meaneſt of Men? How ſhall I pretend to invite thee, my God, into my Houſe, who am ſo far from ſpending a Number of Years or Days, that I can very hardly afford one poor half Hour? Nay, would to God that wretched Remnant of one poor half Hour were but employed as attentively, as devoutly, as it ought to be, to provide thee a clear and acceptable Apartment in this homely Cottage of my Heart. How eager, O my God, how perſevering was the Zeal of thoſe ancient Worthies? How cold, how ſhort is mine, when I ſet myſelf to prepare for meeting and receiving thee? My Thoughts, alas! are very rarely conſiſtent, but a thouſand Wandrings and impertinent Diſtractions intrude upon me; and hardly can I collect the Powers of my Soul into ſo compoſed a Frame, as becomes our more immediate Addreſſes to thee. I am not unmindful of thy Preſence, then more peculiar than at other times; I reflect upon the Indecency and Sin of ſuffering my Heart to divide itſelf; I know, that when an Honour ſo great is intended me, as that of receiving the Lord of Men and Angels, it ought to enlarge and devote its whole Capacity to thee. And yet I cannot fix and fill it with this one Object; but, in deſpight of all my Endeavours and Self-reproaches, Frailty will prevail.

Nay, the ſame Care and Reverence were much too little, where the Dignity of the Thing is ſo much greater. For what Compariſon can there be between an Ark with its ceremonial Symbols, and the myſtical Body of my bleſſed Saviour, with all the wondrous Effects of his Paſſion? How poor and deſpicable were thoſe legal Sacrifices, whoſe greateſt Excellence and Commendation was, that they typified and foretold that one only perfect and ſufficient Sacrifice upon the Croſs, which in this Sacrament we at once commemorate, and apply the Virtue of to ourſelves? If then the Patriarchs and Prophets heretofore expreſſed

their Zeal and Devotion, by all the Marks of Reverence and profound Reſpect, to thoſe Figures of the divine Preſence, and Shadows of good things to come; ſhall I be negligent in my Preparations to meet my God himſelf? Shall I not indeed as much exceed the great Solicitude and pious Affection which Kings and Peaſants, Rich and Poor univerſally expreſſed, as the ſpiritual Participation of my Lord's Body and Blood, and the moſt precious Pledges of his Love and my Salvation, excel the carnal Diſpenſation of a figurative Tabernacle, and the very diſtant and dark Significations of future Bleſſings? They adored the Repreſentation, and ſhall I diſregard the Subſtance, the End, the Perfection of all the Levitical Inſtitutions, the Sum of all God's Mercies, and Man's Hopes? If even *David* thought it no Diſparagement to his royal Character to lay out his Time, his Study, his Strength, in the Service of the Tabernacle; to compoſe Pſalms for the Worſhip of God, to ſtring his own Harp, and himſelf join and preſide in the Conſort; nay, even to dance before the Ark, when brought up to its Place; and by his own Example, to teach his Subjects to exert their utmoſt Might, and employ every Faculty of Body and Soul in expreſſing their Zeal and Joy; what holy Gladneſs then is due, what inflamed Devotion to him, whom *David* in Spirit called Lord? What Songs of Praiſe and Thanks ſhould adorn that ſolemn Feaſt, where Chriſt exhibits to us the heavenly Manna, the Food of Souls? How ſhall we labour to omit no Teſtimony of our Reverence, no Sign of a hearty Welcome, and an humble Senſe of the unſpeakable Honour this King of Heaven does us, when he vouchſafes to come home, and dwell in our Hearts; and, by the conſecrated Elements, verily and indeed to give and unite himſelf to every faithful Soul?

See with what eager Zeal vain Men make long Pilgrimages, and fly to the remoteſt Corners of the World,

World, only to gain a Sight of the Boasted Reliques of some celebrated Saint; to be entertained with long Accounts of Miracles, to kiss a Silken Rag, or prostrate themselves before a Bone set in Gold! But alas! were all the Legends, these fond Men give Credit to, most true, yet what is here, that can deserve their mighty Pains, or tedious Journies? What Shrine can pretend to sanctify, or command Veneration, in any degree comparable to that saving and mystical Presence of God himself upon the Altar? The poor Effects of such mistaken Zeal are but too manifest. Men generally go for Curiosity and Diversion, not for the Improvement of their Minds; and they return accordingly: Better in no respect, except in having seen a thing much talk'd of, which they never had seen before. 'Tis to be hoped, but few are so blind, so wretchedly deluded, to imagine, that such Penances and Painful Travels can do them Service, without true Contrition, and serious Reformation of Life. And where these are, much more substantial Advantages may be had a great deal nearer home. For lo! the King of Saints invites us, He gives the sure and blessed Fruits of Righteousness and Salvation to all, who worthily receive him: An Invitation, in compliance with which, Levity and Sensuality, a Roving Head, or a Gadding Humour, have no part; but all is done by the wise and well-weighed Grace of a stedfast Faith, the comfortable Assurances of a Devout Hope, and the Affectionate Zeal of a Sincere and Holy Love.

O mighty Maker of the World! whom though we plainly see in all thy Works of Wonder, yet Thou thyself remainest invisible; how astonishing are thy Dispensations to the Sons of Men! How sweet, how comfortable, how full of Efficacy, yet still how unaccountable to Sense and Reason, are the Methods, by which thou art pleased to communicate thyself to the Faithful in this Blessed Sacrament! Here thy cho-

chosen and worthy Servants partake of that Heavenly Food, which nourishes their Souls to Life immortal; while Reprobate and bold Intruders take empty Elements, void of Spiritual Substance, and Saving Power. This is a Mystery above our Comprehension. This kindles in us holy Zeal, and engages our devoutest Affections. And by receiving Creatures, in themselves of mean and common Efficacy, we find our Weaknesses strengthened, our Decays recruited, and our Love of Thee and Virtue strangely heightened and confirmed. Who can express, who can conceive, that hidden, that amazing Distinction made in this Holy Supper; whose Graces and Good Effects are so liberally distributed to the Faithful; and yet Unbelievers and Impenitent Men have no Portion, no Experience at all of them? Who can discover those mystical Methods, by which Spiritual Grace is conveyed with Bodily Sustenance? How Bread and Wine should be made Instruments of strengthning the Soul; of purging away the Blemishes and Reproaches of Nature; healing her Deformities and Diseases; taking out the Stains of Sin and vicious Habits, contracted by conversing with a naughty World; subduing furious Passions; rectifying and moderating irregular Desires; and invigorating both the Body and Mind of feeble Sinners at once?

Such is the new Life, and Health, and sprightly Vigour, which good and godly Men experimentally find upon these Occasions. And who then can sufficiently lament the general Lukewarmness, the cold Neglect, the senseless Stupidity of Mankind upon this Occasion? How regardless are they of Christ? How hardly prevailed upon to accept their own Mercy, their Sanctification, their Redemption, in the Ways prescribed by himself for imparting these glorious Advantages? How rudely do they turn their Backs upon that Feast, which creates Joy in Heaven, and preserves Earth and its Inhabitants from Misery and Ruin!

Oh!

Oh! the wretched Blindneſs, the inflexible Obſtinacy and Hardneſs of Mens Hearts, which will not ſee, or ſeeing, will not value ſo ineſtimable Benefits; which turn their very Happineſs into an Occaſion of Deſtruction, by ſuffering the frequent Opportunities, and the very Eaſineſs of attaining theſe precious Privileges, to bring them into a general Diſeſteem; which make the Greatneſs of their Maſter's Love, the abundant Proviſion for their Health and Support, a Pretence for Starving in the midſt of Plenty.

For I can ſcarce perſuade myſelf, but that, if this holy Sacrament could be had in one Place, and from one ſingle Hand only, Men would with eager Zeal repair thither, and vaſt Crowds of People ſtrive to partake of ſo rare a Bleſſing. But now, when every Church, and every Feſtival, when every Prieſt, and almoſt every Lord's Day, exhibits this Delicious Food, brings it home to our Doors, and offers it to as many as are religiouſly and devoutly diſpoſed to accept the gracious Tenders; when every Sermon exhorts, intreats, conjures us to be thus happy; we turn our Backs, and ſlight the cheap, the eaſy Favour. Yet manifeſt it is, that the Kindneſs of our Lord is not the leſs, but much the greater, for putting the Terms of our Salvation within our own Power, and leaving the whole Blame and Condemnation at our own Doors, if we refuſe to take what without our Fault we can never want. And ſhall we then proceed to nauſeate and diſdain our greateſt Bleſſings? To think them leſs valuable for being more common? No, bleſſed Jeſus! We will acknowledge thy unſpeakable Bounty; we will moſt thankfully confeſs thee the good Shepherd, who haſt provided ſuch rich Suſtenance for thy Sheep, and leadeſt them out into Fat Paſtures. Bleſſed be thy Eternal Mercy, who vouchſafeſt to give thy Body, not only for, but to thy poor Servants in this diſconſolate State: Who not content to ſacrifice it once upon

upon the Cross, offerest it daily in the Sacrament; and hast silenced all the Fears and Melancholy Misgivings of our own Guilt and Unworthiness, by that most tender and compassionate, that most extensive and universal Invitation; *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden* with the Burden of your Sins, *and I will refresh you.*

Chap. II.

The Love of God to the Soul manifested in this Sacrament.

Christ.] Behold, Lord, thus encouraged, thus invited, I come; but I do not presume to do so, *trusting in my own Righteousness, but in thy manifold and great Mercies.* I feel, alas! my Weaknesses and Wants; and betake myself to Thee for Relief; sick and diseased, I fly to the Physician of Souls; hungry and thirsty, to this Fountain of Living Water, and Bread of Life; poor and needy, to the Bountiful King of Heaven; a Servant to his kind Master; a Creature to his compassionate Creator, who hateth nothing that he hath made; and a forlorn disconsolate Wretch, to Thee, the Holy, the Eternal, the Only Comforter. But whence is this to Me that my God should vouchsafe to come unto me? Or who am I, that thou should'st communicate to me thy own self? How shall a wicked Sinner dare to appear before thee? Or how can'st Thou, who art of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, endure to make such condescending Approaches to a Soul polluted with Sin and with Uncleanness? Thou seest my very Inward Parts, and knowest I have nothing in me that is good, nothing to invite such Mercy, nothing fit for the

the Reception of so pure, so glorious a Majesty. I will therefore most humbly confess my own Vileness, and thy unspeakable Goodness; I will most thankfully praise, and admire, and adore thy marvellous Love, and exceeding abundant Grace. For this is purely thy own Act. Nothing on my part could deserve, nothing could move thee to it. The more unworthy I am, the more conspicuous is thy Goodness, the more amazing thy Mercy and Condescension. Since therefore thou art pleased to stoop so low, be it unto me according to thy Word. Since thou hast thought fit to command my Approach, I will most gladly testify my ready Obedience; and only beg, that my own Sinfulness may not render me odious in thy Sight, nor frustrate these inestimable Mercies to me.

O sweetest, kindest Saviour, What humble Reverence, what devout Thankfulness can be great enough? What Praise can be sufficiently expressive of that Love, which admits so poor, so miserable a Wretch to the Participation of those Divine Mysteries, the Dignity whereof no Tongue of Men or Angels can worthily set forth? But when I thus address myself to my Lord, and am allowed such intimate Familiarities with him, what sort of Reflections ought to fill my Breast? To approach thee with all the profound Respect due upon such Occasions, is impossible. I will therefore supply my Want of Ability by the Earnestness of my Zeal; and most humbly beseech thee, to accept those hearty Desires of the inestimable Benefit, by which my Soul and all its Faculties, thirst and pant most impatiently after Thee and thy Righteousness. When Thou art the Subject of my Meditations, the Matter is too vast for regular Thought; the Idea too dazzling bright for a finite Understanding; and I quickly feel myself lost in Wonder and Astonishment. I will therefore turn my Eyes inward, and entertain myself with the less pleasing indeed, but no less profitable Prospect

of my own Unworthineſs: Laying my Soul low before thee, and from the Senſe, how little how mere a Nothing, how much worſe than nothing I am, will take the Meaſure of thy Greatneſs, and form Ideas of thy Infinite Goodneſs. I praiſe thee, O my God, from the bottom of my Heart; and extol thy Name for evermore. I deſpiſe and deteſt myſelf; and with the deepeſt Humility put my Soul into thy Hand, that thy Favour and Grace may exalt me, and make this deſpicable Wretch ſomething, who, without thy Mercy, is leſs than nothing.

O the wide Extremes! O the unmeaſurable Diſtance! between God, the Eſſence and Perfection of Holineſs, and Man, the very Abſtract of Filth and Sin! Yet does this God extend Compaſſion, and look down with Pity on thoſe who are not worthy ſo much as to lift up their Eyes to Him. Yet does he come to Us; delight to be with Us, promiſe to dwell with Us; call, and intreat, and importune Us, to ſit and eat deliciouſly with him. He invites the Naked and Hungry, the Beggars and Vagabonds, to his own Table; feeds them with *Angels Food*, Feaſts them with the Bread of Heaven, even that *living Bread which came down from Heaven*, on purpoſe *to give Life unto the World.*

Pſalm lxxviii.

John vi.

Oh! Whence could all this mighty Love proceed? What Account can be given of ſuch wonderful Condeſcenſion, ſuch tender Regards, to loſt unworthy Creatures? What Thanks, what Praiſe, what humble Adoration do thoſe ſo highly obliged, ſo particularly favoured Creatures owe in return for them? How Wiſe, how Saving, was thy Deſign in the firſt Inſtitution of this Holy Supper? How rich, how delightful a Banquet haſt thou prepared for thy Gueſts, by ordering thy own Body and Blood for the myſtical Entertainment of the Faithful? How aſtoniſhing

are

are the Operations of thy Grace and Power! How incomprehenſible the Methods of fulfilling thy moſt true Promiſe! Thou ſpakeſt the Word in the Beginning, and all things were created; and by the ſame Almighty Word, thou commandeſt Bread and Wine, and they nouriſh Souls to Life Eternal.

This is indeed a Subject, contrived for the Exerciſe, not ſo much of our Reaſon as of our Faith. We are not able to account for the mighty Efficacy of Elements, in their own Nature Contemptible and Weak. We know not how that God, whom the whole Heavens cannot contain, ſhould dwell in the Hearts of Men: But this we know, that thou haſt promiſed, by and with this Sacrament, to enter into, and abide in, all worthy Receivers; and thy Truth is ſufficient to ſilence and vanquiſh all thoſe imaginary Difficulties, which Cavilling and Curious Men form to themſelves about it. Come then, and enter, and live, and reign in me for ever; cleanſe and adorn with thy Grace the Place of thy peculiar Reſidence; Preſerve my Heart and Body free from all Impurity, and remove far away whatever may be offenſive to thy holy Eyes; let this Veſſel of mine be conſtantly poſſeſſed in Sanctification and Honour; that, with a peaceful and ſpotleſs Conſcience, I may frequently approach, and eagerly receive theſe adorable Myſteries, which thou haſt appointed, for the Comfort and Salvation of thoſe, whom the King of Heaven delights to honour; and for devout and lively Commemorations of thy own moſt bitter, but moſt meritorious and precious Death.

And thou, my Soul, rejoice and be exceeding glad for ſo noble a Favour, ſo heavenly a Refreſhment, ſo rich a Conſolation, to ſupport and ſweeten thy Paſſage through this Vale of Tears and Miſery. For, every time thou attendeſt theſe holy Myſteries, thou *doſt ſpiritually eat the Fleſh of Chriſt, and drink his Blood*;

thou doſt act as it were over again the Work of thy Redemption, and with great Effect partake of thy Saviour's Merit and Sufferings. For his Love continues always the ſame, and the Excellence and Worth of his Propitiation is an inexhauſtible Spring of Mercy. Come therefore hither with new exalted Zeal, enlarge thy Heart and its Deſires, and doubt not, but thou ſhalt, at every Approach, return with Freſh and plentiful Acceſſions of Grace. Let not the Frequency abate thy Devotion; for this Favour ſhould always ſeem great, this Feaſt always honourable, and the Delights of it always new. And, by the Force of Pious Meditation, thy Myſtery will affect thy wondring Mind at every Repetition, as if the Son of God were juſt that Moment born from the Womb of his Immaculate Mother; as if thy Suffering Redeemer were in that Inſtant labouring under all his Agonies; and thy own Eyes beheld him hanging, and bleeding, and dying, on the Croſs.

Chap. III.

The Benefit of Communicating often.

Diſciple.] Behold, I come to thee, O Lord, deſirous to partake of thy Promiſes, to be enriched with thy Gifts, and feaſted with that Heavenly Banquet, which thy Compaſſion hath prepared for hungry and drooping Souls. I know, O Lord, in Thee is all I need, all I can deſire; my Health and Safety, my Hope and Strength, my Honour and Glory. *Quicken* therefore and Cheriſh *the Soul of thy Servant*; for *unto Thee*, O bleſſed Jeſus, *do I lift up my Soul.* It is my earneſt longing to receive thee with a becoming Reverence and Devotion. The height of my

my Ambition is to bring thee Home to my Houſe; and, with *Zaccheus* of old, to be bleſſed, and reckoned by thee among the true Spiritual *Sons of Abraham.* My Soul deſires to be fed and ſtrengthened by thy Body, and my Heart to be entirely knit, inſeparably united to Thee.

Give me but thyſelf, and whatever elſe thou withholdeſt, I am ſatisfied. For all Things beſides are miſerable Comforters, and rather aggravate than abate my Wretchedneſs. Without thy Conſolations I am not able to ſubſiſt: And therefore I feel an abſolute neceſſity of coming to thee often for freſh Supplies of Grace and Strength. My Spirits languiſh and ſink, and, if I faſt too long, I periſh for want of ſeaſonable Recruits from this heavenly Suſtenance. Thy Bowels heretofore yearned over the Multitudes, who came from far to hear thy Saving Doctrine, and to be healed of their Bodily Diſtempers. Thou would'ſt not ſend them away empty, but wer't pleaſed to feed them by a Miracle, leſt they ſhould faint by the way. *Matth.* xv. Extend the ſame Compaſſion towards Me, and let this Sacrament ſuſtain my fainting Soul, in this Wilderneſs, barren and remote from any true Comfort. For thou art the ſweet, the reviving Food of ſinking and weary Spirits; and they, who worthily partake of this Repaſt, are nouriſhed unto Life Eternal. I am ſadly ſenſible of my Infirmities, and frequent Relapſes into Sin, and how urgent my Occaſions are for theſe repeated Refreſhments. I quickly cool after my warmeſt Reſolutions; my Purpoſes of Goodneſs ſicken and languiſh apace; and theſe Decays muſt end in Spiritual Death, did not my Prayers, my Self-examinations, my Confeſſions and Holy Sorrows, preparatory to this holy Feaſt, often return; did not this Divine Suſtenance cleanſe and renew my Affections; confirm my Purpoſes of doing well, excite and inflame my Zeal and Love for God and Good Works.

Obſtinate Faſting would not more certainly quench all my Vital Heat, and deſtroy my Body; than too long Abſtinence from this Spiritual Food will waſte and quite extinguiſh the Soul, and all its Powers of Living well.

I find and heartily bewail, a fatal Tendency to Evil; and my Experience, from my very Cradle, ſhews me, how ſtrongly I incline to Sin, and fall from bad to worſe, except a Remedy from above check this Indiſpoſition, and ſuccour and ſupport me from plunging into Hell. This Holy Communion is that Remedy. It calls back my wandring Steps, prevents my falling by Relapſe or Neglect, and ſtrengthens me in Grace and Goodneſs. And if, even in my ſtudied and moſt laboured Devotions, I am ſo often cold, ſo lukewarm at the beſt; how frozen ſhould I be, how inſenſible and dead, were theſe Helps laid aſide, and no ſuch Application uſed to warm and quicken me? Though therefore my Life be not ſo perfect, that I am always in a fit Diſpoſition to communicate; yet it ſhall be my Care, at ſolemn and proper Seaſons, not to loſe the Benefit of theſe holy Myſteries, or ever to refuſe my own Happineſs. For this is the Sovereign Balm of wounded Conſciences; the great Preſervative of decaying Souls, the chearing Comfort of the Faithful, mourning their preſent State of Baniſhment, and groaning earneſtly for a Releaſe from the Afflictions and Infirmities of thoſe Mortal Bodies, to which thy Providence hath for a Time confined them. And the oftener they thus remember their God, the greater is that Affection, and humble Devotion, with which they court and embrace their beloved Spouſe and Lord.

But oh! how amazing is thy Love? And what is Man whom thou vouchſafeſt to viſit, when the great God, the Creator of the World, and Father of the Spirits of all Fleſh, does not diſdain to deſcend into

into a poor Soul, and fill the hungry Wretch with all his Fatneſs? Happy that Breaſt, which is thus honoured, and unſpeakable the Joy, with which it overflows! How glorious a Maſter, how agreeable a Gueſt, how pleaſant a Companion, how faithful a Friend, how beautiful, how honourable, how charming a Huſband, does it entertain and embrace? Let Heaven and Earth, and all their boaſted Excellencies, keep ſilence before him; for if I have my Jeſus, I have all. For I have him, from whom all other Things derive their Excellence; and their borrowed precarious Perfections can miniſter no Joy, can make no Happineſs, without this great Original. They in themſelves are nothing, they are but what he made them; and He alone is more, incomparably more and better, than all that ever was, or could be made.

Chap. IV.

The Pleaſures of Devout Communion.

Diſciple. PRevent me, I moſt humbly beſeech thee, my Lord and my God, with the Bleſſings and Graces of thy Holy Spirit; that thy Servant may taſte thy Sweetneſs, and approach this precious Feaſt, with ſuch Reverence, and Zeal, and fervent Devotion, as thou wilt be pleaſed to accept. O viſit me with thy Salvation, and awaken me from Spiritual Sloth and Slumber; that I now may vigorouſly apply myſelf, to draw and drink the living Water, contain'd in this Fountain open for Sin and for Uncleanneſs. Enlighten the Eyes of my Mind, that I may ſee the wondrous Things of this thy Inſtitution; and ſtrengthen my Faith, that I may firmly and without ſcruple believe and expect thoſe Operations, which my Rea-

ſon is not able to account for. And why indeed ſhould I make any Difficulty to believe, what I cannot comprehend and trace the dark Footſteps of; when I remember, that it is not the Act of finite feeble Man, but the Work of an Almighty God; not an Invention or Project of Human Reaſon, but the Inſtitution and Promiſe of Him, who worketh all Things according to the wiſe and wonderful Counſel of his own unbounded Will? To fathom theſe Depths to the bottom were an Attempt impracticable, even to the refined Underſtanding of an Angel. Well then may poor ſhort ſighted Man turn giddy at the ſight of this Abyſs, and confeſs the Well too deep, and the Cordage too ſhort. Such and no better is the Condition of the moſt exalted Saints; and what can I, the feebleſt even of Men, vile ſinful Duſt and Aſhes, hope to diſcover, by my moſt induſtrious Search into theſe heavenly Myſteries?

Inſtead therefore of nice Reaſoning and unprofitable Diſputes, I will approach with Singleneſs of Heart, with firm and holy Hope, with an undoubting Faith, and profound Reverence. Whatever the Vanity of Worldly Wiſdom may ſuggeſt to the contrary, I will not queſtion, but thou art preſent in the Sacrament, though I cannot ſatisfy the captious Enquiries after the particular manner of that Preſence. Thy Human and Divine Nature are inſeparable; thus much I know, and no more but this; that thou art ſo preſent as God, as not to contradict thy being Man. 'Tis upon this Account, that thou art pleaſed to command my receiving thee, and haſt engaged to make me One with thyſelf, by the ſtricteſt Union of a holy Love. Shed therefore, I pray thee, thy ſpecial Grace into my Heart, that I may diſſolve in this holy Fire, and become entirely thine. Purge off my Droſs, and let me no more endure the Allay of any baſer Mixtures. For this Sacrament is the pureſt, the nobleſt Refi-

Refiner of Souls, the Health of the whole Man, the Reſtorative of Spiritual Decays, the Cure of Vice, the Curb of Paſſions, the Antidote againſt Troubles and Temptations; the Conveyancer of greater Grace; the Increaſe of imperfect Virtue; the Stay of Hope; the Support of our Faith, and the mighty Incentive of our Charity.

Who can expreſs the manifold, the aſtoniſhing Benefits, which thou frequently impartest to thy Beloved and Religious Servants, by communicating in this bleſſed Supper? Even thou, my God, the Cheriſher of my Soul, the Repairer of my Breaches by Infirmity and Sin, and the Reſtorer of my inward Comfort and Peace. By this thou ſuſtaineſt them in Sadneſs and Affliction, and enableſt them to walk upon the Waves of a troubleſome World. By this thou cheareſt their Melancholy and Diſtruſt, and raiſeſt up their ſinking Spirits with Aſſurance of thy Gracious Protection and Aſſiſtance. By this thou reneweſt their Nature, and purifieſt their Affections; that They, who came at firſt to this Table, with great Lothneſs and Dulneſs, feel a new Warmth within, and by degrees are brought to frequent it with unſpeakable Reliſh and Delight. Theſe happy and glorious Effects thou produceſt, by ſuch uncommon, unlikely Means, that Men may find experimentally their own Infirmities; how little they are able to do of themſelves, and how much, when ſtrengthened by thee. That they are cold, inſenſible, ſtupid and dead to all Religious Duties, is from their own Diſpoſition; that they are zealous in good Works, chearful in thy Service, devout in thy Worſhip, is purely thy Gift. And ſure none can come hither with tolerable Attention, but he muſt return with ſome Improvement. For who can lie at the Fountain-head, and not receive ſome Tincture from the Sweetneſs of the Spring? Who can ſtand cloſe to the Fire, and feel no Heat? But thou art a Fountain

ever full, ever over-flowing. Thou art the Fire, whose Flames are constantly expanding themselves, to kindle holy Affections in all those, who are careful to approach, and put themselves in the way of their Activity.

It may be I am not worthy to drink at the Head of this Spring, or to take my Fill of its refreshing Streams; but yet at least I will apply my Mouth to some of its distant Pipes, and spreading Rills, to catch a few of the Drops, as they slide by, that I be not utterly barren, nor die with Drought and Thirst. I may not be able to approach this Flame so near, that it should refine and brighten me to a degree equal with the Purity of the Cherubim and Seraphim; but yet I will not despair of being so far cherished and warmed by it, that my Zeal may be exalted according to the Brightness of Human Virtues: And my enlivened Heart shall feel some Glowings, if it do not flame out heavenly clear. Defects and Infirmities I know, I cannot be exempted from: But what is wanting, I beg my merciful Jesus would supply. His Kindness will not fail to make all equitable Allowances, and his Wisdom knows where they are proper to be made. Forgiven and made up they may be: and I, unworthy as I am, may be accepted. But that Unworthiness must not be made a Pretence for detaining me from this Sacrament. For sure the most unworthy are comprehended, and they who see, and lament, that they are such, can least of all be excluded; when he pronounces that general Invitation, *Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*

The oftener I descend into myself, the more I am convinced, that this Description exactly suits my State. I fulfil the Primitive Sentence upon fallen Man, and labour in the Sweat of my Face. The Sorrows of my Heart perplex and di-

Gen. iii.

distract me, the Burthen of my Sins presses me down, the Multitude of my Temptations are a perpetual Torment and Vexation; the Variety and Exorbitance of my corrupt Affections entangle and confound, and overpower my Reason. And in the midst of these Calamities and Dangers, I have no Succour, no Defence, no Supporter or Deliverer, but only thee, my God; and therefore into thy Hands, my merciful Maker and Saviour, I commit myself, and all my Affairs; and beg, that thou would'st keep what is thus deposited with thee, safe unto Life Eternal. O take me therefore into thy Custody, and, as thou hast ordained thy Body and Blood to be the Food of Immortality; so grant, that it may have its proper Efficacy upon my Soul in particular, to the Glory of thy Name, and the Honour of so blessed an Institution. And, that no Neglect or Unfruitfulness of mine may obstruct its kindly and powerful Operations; Grant, I beseech thee, my God and Saviour, that I never may be guilty of such Disrespect, as wilfully to turn my Back upon thy Table; but may earnestly long for, heartily rejoice in, and diligently comply with, every Opportunity of receiving this mighty Blessing; and may so frequent, and so improve under, thy merciful Dispensation; that I may constantly return, with greater Care and Zeal, more settled Resolutions, more irreconcileable Hatred against Sin, and more fervent Love for God and Goodness, than before. So shall I approach nearer to thee indeed, and each Sacrament prove a fresh Advance toward Heaven. So shall my Soul be filled with the Treasures of thy Mercy, the Delights of thy Secret ones, and the ravishing Foretastes of that Bliss, which shall be always growing, till it be consummated at last in that Eternal Feast above, the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb in thy Kingdom. *Amen.*

Chap. V.

The Dignity of the Sacrament, and Honour of the Prieſthood.

Chriſt.] IF thou ſeeſt the Table richly furniſhed, and art deſirous to feaſt upon theſe dainty Meats, let that Deſire be duly tempered with Reverence and holy Fear. For know, that if thou hadſt the Purity of an Angel, or the mortified Piety of *John* the Baptiſt, yet even thou could'ſt not deſerve ſo Divine a Bleſſing, but ought'ſt to acknowledge it a mighty Favour and Condeſcenſion, that thou art admitted to receive, and taſte, or even to touch this Bleſſed Sacrament. That Man ſhould conſecrate thoſe Elements, and by pronouncing a ſet Form of Words introduce a new Efficacy, and give them a myſtical Power, which Nature neither did, nor could provide them with before; that the Perſons preſent ſhould eat the Bread of Angels, and be filled with heavenly Food, by virtue of ſuch Conſecration: Theſe are not the Effect of any extraordinary Merit, in them who ſanctify, or who receive, thoſe Creatures of Bread and Wine, but the pure and ſole Effect of Mercy and Grace. The Greatneſs of the Myſtery does indeed magnify the Prieſtly Office; and Men ought to pay a more than common Reſpect to thoſe Perſons, whom God hath honoured with a Privilege, not imparted to the very Angels themſelves. For they, who are regularly ordained in the Church, are the only Perſons, by whoſe Miniſtry God gives the Body of his Son to us. They are the Perſons acting by his Commiſſion, they uſe the Form appointed by Chriſt himſelf and have a conſtant mighty Effect attending upon their due Adminiſtration. But ſtill our Thoughts and Wonder muſt not terminate in Them, as if by

their

their own Power and Holineſs they could bring ſuch things to paſs. For they are only Inſtruments; and therefore we muſt carry our Meditations further, up as high as God himſelf, for he is the firſt and principal Cauſe, he the inviſible Worker of this Miracle of Mercy. It is his Word, which made, and governs all Things, that only can command material and common Elements to produce ſpiritual and extraordinary Effects, and ſtrengthen and refreſh the Souls of the Faithful by the Body and Blood of Chriſt; at the ſame time, and with as certain Operation, as their Bodies are ſtrengthened and refreſhed by the Bread and Wine.

When therefore thou approacheſt the Chriſtian Altar, reſt not in the Teſtimony of thy Senſes, nor dwell upon the *outward and viſible Signs*; but let thy Faith carry thee on to *the inward and ſpiritual Grace*, and exerciſe itſelf in contemplating the almighty Power of God. And thou, to whom the invoking this Power and its efficacious Preſence is committed, ſee that thou do it with awful Reverence and godly Fear: Conſider whoſe Servant thou art, and what a glorious Character thou haſt received by Impoſition of the Biſhop's Hands. For thou art ordained a Prieſt for noble and religious Purpoſes. The Excellence of thy Office conſiſts in giving thy Maſter's Family their Portion of Meat in due manner and ſeaſon. Be faithful therefore in the Execution of this weighty Truſt; proceed in it with a fervent and exemplary Devotion, and let it be thy firſt Care to offer up thyſelf an unreprovable Sacrifice to God. Do not imagine any Part of thy Privilege to conſiſt in an Exemption from the Duties incumbent upon common Chriſtians. Alas! thy Burden is not leſs, but greater; thy Temptations more and fiercer, thy Danger more imminent, for being thus diſtinguiſhed. For it will be expected, that the Sanctity of thy Manners, the Severity of thy Vir-

tue, the Conqueſt of thy Paſſions, the Perfection of thy Holineſs, the Fervency and Zeal of thy Devotion ſhould diſtinguiſh thee as viſibly, as eminently as thy Garb and thy Profeſſion do. That thou ſhouldſt be cloathed and adorned with that Righteouſneſs, that Innocence, that Gravity, of which thy Robe is a ſignificant Emblem; and as thou art become a Leader, thou ſhouldſt likewiſe be a Pattern to the Flock. For the Converſation of ſuch Perſons ſhould be no longer conformable to the Cuſtoms and corrupt Examples of the World, but conformed to the Angels in Heaven, or to the Saints that excel in Virtue upon Earth.

When thou entereſt into the holy Place, and there putteſt on the Garments of thy Function, conſider what thou art going about, and how high a Place thou haſt obtained; no leſs than to be the Repreſentative of the great High-Prieſt in Heaven, and to miniſter in his ſtead unto his People. Firſt, therefore, with all Humility bewail thy own Unworthineſs, and confeſs thy own Sins. Then with a moſt extenſive Charity and tender Compaſſion, bewail and intercede for the Sins of others. Look upon thyſelf as a Mediator between God and Trangreſſors; to offer up their Prayers, Confeſſions, and Thankſgivings to him; and to hand down his Pardon and Bleſſing to them. And be not ſlothful or unthinking, careleſs or cold in this Affair; for it is moſt important, and requires thy moſt diligent Attention, thy moſt earneſt Importunity, thy moſt indefatigable Perſeverance; never to be abated, till thou have gained thy Point, and prevailed for Mercy and Grace, by thoſe reſolute Wreſtlings with God. But when thou celebrateſt the holy Supper, remember thou art about a Work, which all Heaven and Earth are concerned in. A Work, which, when performed as it ought, brings Honour to God, Joy to the bleſſed Angels, Edification to the Church

of

of Christ, Conversion to Sinners, Peace to wounded Consciences, Comfort to the Afflicted, Strength to the Feeble, and to thyself abundance of Grace, and an exceeding great Reward.

Chap. VI.

An Act of Preparation before the Sacrament.

Disciple.] Behold, Lord, with thy wonted Mercy, the Doubts and Confusions of my troubled Breast. For when I look up to Heaven, and consider the Majesty of my great, my holy God, and from thence draw my Eyes back upon myself, and view my own Vileness and horrible Sinfulness, I am all Perplexity, and Distraction, and Horror. Thou biddest me come, and if I refuse or neglect to comply with that gracious Invitation, I forsake my own Mercy, and deprive myself of Life and Happiness. But If I come unworthily, I am equally miserable, and shall be punished for the high Indignity of bringing so polluted a Guest to so pure and heavenly a Feast. What Course then shall I take to be safe, when Danger and Death threaten on either Hand? I will even fly to thee, my God; and instead of consulting with Flesh and Blood, or hearkening to the deceitful Insinuations of my too rash or too timorous Reason, will ask Counsel of thee, my infallible and only Oracle in Distresses.

Teach me, I beseech thee, the right Way, and lead me in such Methods of holy Preparation, as may be proper and suitable to so exalted an Act of Religion. I know that these Approaches to thee in the blessed Sacrament are exceeding beneficial and delightful; but

but make me know withal, in what manner thou must be approached, to render that which is desirable in itself safe and profitable to me in particular. Give me, I beseech thee, a due Sense of the Greatness of the Mystery, and the Excellence of thy Mercy in it; and consequent to that, fill my Soul with pure and holy Affections, with earnest Longings, with godly Sorrow, with sincere and stedfast Resolutions, with profound Reverence and ardent Devotion; that my Heart may be a clean, tho' homely, Receptacle for my Saviour, such as he will not disdain; and I so well-disposed a Guest at this divine Feast, this spiritual Sacrifice, that thou mayst bid me welcome to thy Table, and the Food I receive there may nourish me up to Health and Life eternal. *Amen.*

Chap. VII.

Of Self-Examination.

Christ.] *ABOVE all Keepings, keep thy* Heart; and whether Priest or private Christian, take good heed that at thy coming to my holy Table, thy Devotion consist not in outward Gesture, and Pomp, and Shew only. I am not to be imposed upon with such empty Formalities, but require an upright, humble, and devout Mind; a Mind low and prostrate as thy Body, a stedfast Faith, and pure Intention, and unfeigned Zeal for God's Honour. Therefore, before thou presume to approach, examine well how thou art qualified. Search every Corner of thy Conscience, and do thy utmost to purge and cast out all Remains of the old Leaven. Let no Sin unrepented of reproach thee, no Lust unmortified divide thy Affections, and hinder thy free and entire Resignation to my Will.

Conceive

Conceive a juſt Hatred and Indignation againſt all thy Sins in general; and for thoſe which are either too groſs to be overlook'd, or too habitual to be forgotten expreſs a particular and proportionable Reſentment of Sorrow and Shame. And if thou have Time and Leiſure, look well into the Irregularities of all thy Paſſions, and in thy private Retirements make a full Confeſſion of them between God and thy own Soul.

Recollect and bewail the unhappy Prevalence of worldly and carnal Affections, every exorbitant Deſire, every ungoverned Paſſion. Obſerve how the Motions of evil Concupiſcence abound and domineer; how unguarded thou art in thy outward Behaviour, and the general Courſe of thy Converſation; how eaſily thou art ſeduced by Vanity; how vehemently diſpoſed to the Gratifications of Appetite and Senſe; how careleſs and ſtupid in the weightier Concerns of thy Soul; how apt to let thyſelf looſe to Laughter and extravagant Mirth, and how exceeding loth to mourn for thy Sins with a true, ſaving, and neceſſary Contrition; how eagerly thou purſueſt the Pleaſures and Advantages of the Body, and how heavy and ſlothful thou art in the Exerciſes of Mortification and godly Zeal; how mighty curious and inquiſitive after News and Trifles, and greedy to be entertained with every Pomp and Beauty that can pleaſe thy Sight; but how negligent and backward, how full of Diſregard and Diſdain to Things of leſs gay Appearance, but of true inward Worth, and mighty Conſequence to thy better State; how greedy of Gain; how ſparing in thy Alms how tenacious of this World's Goods; how inconſiderate in thy Diſcourſe, how childiſh and trifling, how wicked or obſcene; how laviſh and profuſe; and what a Torment it is to *ſet a Guard before thy Mouth, and keep the Door of thy Lips*; how affected or extravagant in thy Behaviour, how eager in thy Actions, how inordinate in *Pſal.* cxli.

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thy Appetites; but how slow and deaf to the Word of God; how negligent in hearing, and how inflexible to be persuaded by what thou hast heard; how prone to Rest and Ease, and how averse to Labour and necessary Care; how wakeful and attentive at Plays or Balls, and how drowsy and lifeless in Prayer and holy Duties; how impatient till they are done; and how full of wandring and impertinent Thoughts while they are in doing; how easily diverted from thy stated Hours of Devotion; how lukewarm in receiving the blessed Sacrament, how unfixed in thy Mind at the very time of communicating, and how barren and unprofitable afterwards; how soon provoked to Anger upon every slight Miscarriage, and yet how apt to give Offence to others; how prone to judge and severely censure thy Brethren; how stiff and positive in those Judgments and hard Constructions; how insolent and immoderately exalted with good Fortune, and how feeble and dejected under every Cross or Disappointment; how full of good Intentions, and how few of those Intentions have any good Effect.

These, and many other Defects, of which each Man's own Conscience can best inform him, it is thy Duty to enquire into very nicely; to bewail seriously, to confess with the profoundest Humility, and with firm Purpose of Amendment for the time to come. When this is done, then, without any secret Reserve to thy own Inclinations, resign thyself up entirely to God, to be governed by him, and offer to the Glory of his Name *thy Soul and Body a holy, living, and reasonable Sacrifice*, Thus shalt thou come to me worthily, and receive my mystical Body to thy infinite Advantage.

For there is no other Satisfaction in Man's Power to make for his great Affronts, and manifold Provocations against the Majesty on high; no Oblation more acceptable than that of a *broken and contrite*, a

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pure and upright Heart, offered to God in this Sacrament. He desires nothing but thyself, and he desires this, not for his own, but for thy sake. He who brings it, let him not doubt Acceptance; for God never despises or rejects a true Penitent, but embraces returning Prodigals with the Tenderness of a Father; and grants them Pardon for the past, and Grace for the future. His Word, his Oath is passed. And he who cannot lie may securely be depended upon. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no Pleasure in the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live*; and *at what time soever the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness which he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his Soul alive: Repent therefore, and turn yourselves from all your Transgressions, and so Iniquity shall not be your Ruin. For I will be merciful to your Unrighteousness, and your Sins and Iniquities will I remember no more.* *Ezek.* xviii. *Heb.* viii.

Chap. VIII.

Christ died for us, that we should live to him.

Christ.] Behold, and take Example by me. I hung upon the Cross with a naked Body and stretch'd-out Arms, and thus offered myself to my Father for thy Sins. No Part of me remained, which was not given in Atonement, to appease the Wrath of thy justly incensed Judge. And thou in like manner must think it thy Duty, freely and wholly to give up thyself a clean and holy Sacrifice. Every Power, every Affection of Soul, must be consecrated to me in the blessed Sacrament. What doth the Lord require of thee, but to consult thy own Interest, and save thy

thy self, by conveying over thyself to Me? Whatever else thou dedicatest to my Service is of no Value, no Consideration with Me; for I seek not thine, but thee.

As all the World besides would fail of procuring thy Happiness and Satisfaction if deprived of Me, so all thy Wealth and Gifts set apart for my Use, can never be well-pleasing in my Sight, unless with them thou givest thy own self. My whole Person was sacrificed for thy Redemption; either of my Natures single had been insufficient to propitiate for thy Sins; my whole Body and Blood is set upon my Table for thy Entertainment; and what can be the meaning of all this, but that I should be entirely thine, and thou entirely mine? But if thou art not sincere in this Oblation, if it be made with any Provisos and Exceptions, the Offering is not perfect, the Sacrifice is maimed, defective in its Parts; and the Union which should follow upon it, must be proportionably lame and imperfect. The first thing therefore to be taken care of, is the liberal and full Resignation of thy Person. This must recommend and sanctify all thy other Acts of Religion; and till thou art released from the Bondage of divided Affections, thou canst not attain Grace and true Liberty. Hence it is, and upon no other Account, that of so many Professors, and seemingly good Christians, so very few stand fast in the Liberty with which Christ hath made them free. The Condition is fixed, and irreversible: *If a Man forsake not all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple.* And

Luke xiv.

therefore if thou desire to be found in this happy Number, enter my Courts with a Free-will-Offering, and consecrate every Inclination, every Faculty of thy Soul. Have no Love, no Desires, but mine. *Submit thyself wholly to my holy Will and Pleasure, and study to serve me truly in Holiness and Righteousness all thy Days in all the Actions of thy Life.*

CHAP.

Chap. IX.

An Act of Self-Resignation.

Disciple.] IT *is very meet, right, and my bounden Duty*, that I should do as thou requirest; for this, O Lord, is but to give thee of thy own. Heaven and Earth are thine, and all that therein is. I desire with Singleness of Heart to dedicate myself to thee, never to retract the Gift, but continue thine for ever. Accept me therefore entirely devoted to thy Service, from this Day forward a Sacrifice of Praise and perpetual Thanksgiving. I call those blessed Spirits to witness, who tho' invisible to human Eyes, constantly assist at our solemn Acts of religious Worship; humbly beseeching thee, that the Oblation of thy dear Son's blessed Body represented in this Sacrament, may be effectual for the Salvation of me, and of all thy faithful People.

I offer to thee, Lord, my manifold Sins and Transgressions, my corrupt Inclinations and vicious Habits, which from my Youth up until now have so grievously provoked thy Wrath and just Indignation, to be a whole Burnt sacrifice. Slay them, O Lord, before thy Altar, and consume them in the Fire of thy Love, that not any the least Spot of Guilt may remain behind. Purge my Conscience from their Stain, and wipe out their very Remembrance. Restore to me thy Grace, which my Sins and wilful Neglects have so often forfeited. Give *me the Comfort of thy Help again, and establish me with thy free, thy* renewing *Spirit*; and having sealed a full Pardon for what is past, receive me to thy fatherly Embraces, and assure me of thy Affection by a Kiss of Reconciliation and Peace. *Psal.* ii.

What Satisfaction can I make for my Injuries and bold Affronts to thy righteous Laws, but that alone of humble Confeſſion, deep Sorrow, and hearty Prayers, for thy Acceptance of thy Son's Atonement? I do moſt heartily bewail and deteſt all my Wickedneſſes, and by thy Grace will never be guilty of the like any more. I do, and will to the laſt Minute of my Life, grieve for theſe Follies; and am deſirous, by my future Carriage, to teſtify the Truth of my Repentance, and make the beſt Reparation I am able for the Scandal I have given formerly. O Lord, pardon; O Lord, forgive; defer not for thy own ſake, O my God; but let thy Mercy be glorified in ſparing the Soul of thy Servant, whom thou haſt redeemed with thy moſt precious Blood. Behold, I commit myſelf wholly to thy Mercy, and depoſit my Spirit in thy Hands. O deal with me according to thy great Goodneſs, and not after my Sins and grievous Wickedneſs.

To thee I humbly offer all in me that is good. A very poor imperfect Offering, I with Shame confeſs it; but worthleſs as it is, I beg thou wilt accept it. Supply my Defects, ſanctify and exalt what is debaſed with Infirmity or impure Mixtures; diſdain not my ſincere tho' weak Endeavours; enable me daily to do better; and raiſe at laſt this ſlothful, unprofitable Creature, to ſuch degrees of Virtue and ſucceſsful Activity, as may, by the more diligent Uſe of thy Grace, end in a bleſſed and bright Eternity.

I alſo offer up to thee the Prayers and good Wiſhes of all that have interceded for me, or deſired my Interceſſions for them; the Neceſſities and Diſtreſſes of my Friends and Relations, and all that have done Good to me or others for thy ſake, imploring that thou wouldſt aſſiſt them by thy Grace, comfort them in their Troubles, protect them in all Dangers, deliver them from Puniſhment and Death eternal; and ſo reſcue them from Evil, that they may magnify thy good

good Providence, and with thankful Hearts rejoice in thy Mercy.

In a more particular manner accept, I beseech thee my most hearty Prayers and Peace offerings for all who have injur'd me in Word or Deed, created me any Disturbance by ill Treatment, slandered or reviled me with ill Language, or given me any manner of Uneasiness or angry Resentment. And likewise for all whom I have injur'd, grieved or offended by Word or Deed, knowingly or ignorantly, with or without Design; intreating thy Forgiveness for all that hath been done or taken amiss on either side. Take away, thou who lovedst and diedst for thy Enemies, all Rancour and Malice, all Grudges and revengeful Thoughts, all passionate Remembrances and Dispositions to Strife and Debate, all that may be inconsistent with true Charity, or tend to the Decay of brotherly Love. Have Mercy, Lord, on all who sue for Mercy; supply the Needs of all that want; and grant us all such Measures of thy Grace, and so firm Perseverance in it, that we may grow up to such degrees as this mortal State is capable of here, and may receive our perfect Consummation and Bliss both in Body and Soul in thy eternal and everlasting Glory. *Amen.*

Chap. X.

The Sin and Mischief of absenting from the Lord's-Supper.

Christ.] IT is by no means sufficient that Men do once, or very rarely, repair to this holy Sacrament; but as their Occasions and Necessities are frequent, so should their Care in seeking Supplies be. The Passions of the Soul are daily in Commotion, and

its Diſeaſes and evil Habits get round by their malignant ſpreading Quality. The Temptations of the Devil are ſeldom intermitted, or if they be, it is only out of wicked Subtilty, that even thoſe Intervals of Quiet may contribute the more effectually to Mens Ruin. And if this be, as moſt aſſuredly it is thy Caſe, think then how urgent thy Wants are, and how frequent thy Returns ought to be to this Fountain of divine Grace; that here thou may'ſt drink living Water, and quench the raging Fevers of thy Soul; that here thou may'ſt receive Balm into thy Wounds, and apply proper Remedies to thy ſeveral Indiſpoſitions; that thou may'ſt grow more wiſe and wary by ſuch Recollections, more clearly underſtand thy own State, by thoſe Examinations which prepare thee for my Table; and by repeating this holy Meal, be ſtrengthened againſt the Aſſaults of the Enemy, and more upon thy Guard againſt his ſubtil Inſinuations. And one of his Inſinuations it certainly is, to hinder and draw Men off from communicating often, as being very ſenſible how great and happy Advantages they reap by doing ſo, and that this is the very beſt Courſe they can poſſibly take of ſecuring themſelves, and defeating his malicious Endeavours to debauch and deſtroy their Souls.

For this Reaſon Men are not to think it ſtrange, if they find the Devil then more eſpecially buſy, when they ſet themſelves with more than common Earneſtneſs to the Preparation for, or the Exerciſe of the moſt ſolemn and exalted Acts of Religion. For this wicked Spirit, as the Hiſtory of *Job* intimates, is always induſtrious to mingle himſelf with the Sons of God when they appear before their heavenly Father. He contrives then to give them great Diſturbance, to damp their Joys, and break their holy Purpoſes, by ſuggeſting many Fears, and diſtracting their Minds with unneceſſary Scruples. He terrifies them with *eating and drinking their own Damnation*,

Job. i.

Damnation, and keeps them back by mistaken Notions of their Unworthiness and Danger. If he can either thus prevail for a total Neglect of this Sacrament, or contrive that they shall come full of Doubt and Dissatisfaction, he gains his Point. But be not ignorant of his Devices; inform thyself rightly of thy Duty, and wherein Unworthiness doth truly consist; that nothing but want of Sincerity and true Reverence can bring thee into Hazard, and then despise his vain Attempts to discompose and evacuate thy good Intentions. Retort his wicked Craft back upon his own Head, by being more vigilant, more careful, more resolved; but by no means omit this Duty, nor suffer thyself to be drawn off from that Communion, which is the sovereign Antidote, the best Preservative against Sin and Temptation.

If he labour to disguise his deviliſh Arts under the specious Colour of Caution and Humility, and want of more perfect Devotion, lay aside thy unprofitable and disquieting Anxieties, and flee for Succour and Advice to some godly Pastor. Let his Prudence direct thy doubting Steps, and unbosom thyself freely to him; that by confessing thy Sins, and opening thy Case to the Physician of Souls, thou may'st receive the Benefit of ghostly Counsel, and the Comfort of Absolution. Know that no Sin can hurt thee, or render thee an unworthy Receiver, when once confessed, and seriously repented of; and that when this is done, all thy Doubts and Perplexities hinder the Grace of God, and check thy Improvement in Piety and Devotion. Let not any ordinary Trouble or Affliction deter thee from coming to thy Lord for Relief, but make the greater haste to reconcile thyself to God, and purge away those Offences which may have provoked and drawn down the Affliction upon thee. Let not any Difference between thee and thy Brethren detain thee; for there is a short and ready way of removing this Obstruction, by forgiving and praying

for thoſe who have grieved or injured thee; and by reconciling thyſelf, and aſking Pardon of thoſe whom thou haſt offended. And if they ſtill be ſo perverſe, as not to be reconciled upon a due Submiſſion, yet conſider, their Obſtinacy and Wickedneſs ought to be no Obſtruction to the Performance of thy Duty. Thou haſt done thy Part, and God will be ſure to forgive, and accept thy Perſon, tho' Men do not.

What Benefit can a Man poſſibly propoſe to himſelf from the putting off Examination and Repentance, and forbearing to come to the holy Communion? Moſt certainly when one is diſeaſed, the greateſt Wiſdom is to get well again as ſoon as poſſibly he can; to expel the Malignity, and diſcharge the Venom immediately. Thus will the Cure be eaſier, more ſpeedy, more ſucceſsful. For every Delay adds to the Diſtemper, and gathers freſh and more obſtinate Matter. If you omit the preſent Opportunity upon one Pretence, another, and more pr vailing, may interpoſe, and deprive you of the next. And thus by degrees you will be wrought upon to excuſe thyſelf again and again, and by longer Abſtinence become leſs fit, as well as leſs willing, to return to your Duty. Whatever Burthen then you find upon your Mind, get quit of it betimes; do not indulge your Sloth and Backwardneſs a Moment; for there never can come any good of prolonging your Cares and Troubles, and making the common Hindrances of worldly Buſineſs a Reaſon for neglecting your great, your eternal Intereſt. This is moſt manifeſt, and Experience will prove the Truth of it when it is too late; that the longer you defer communicating, the leſs you will find yourſelf diſpoſed to it; and a ſtrange Careleſſneſs and Diſregard for holy Exerciſes will inſenſibly creep upon your Mind, and get a mighty head. But, which is a moſt lamentable thing to conſider, many looſe

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and dissolute, nay, many thoughtless and lukewarm People, allow themselves in this Indifference, and industriously seek Pretences to defer their Repentance and Approaches to the Lord's Table, merely to avoid, as they think, the necessity of parting with their darling Lusts, and the keeping that strict Guard upon their Conversation, without which they must be lost to all Eternity.

How cold, alas! is those Mens Love for me; how feeble their Devotion, who upon such frivolous Pretences can dispense with this so necessary Duty, so glorious Privilege, of communicating at my Table? How happy, how easy to himself, how acceptable, how dear to God, is that Man, whose Conduct is so strictly virtuous, whose Conscience so void of Stain and Reproach, that he could every Day most chearfully, most safely partake of this heavenly Feast, were the Opportunities of doing it equal to his Disposition, and might his Zeal escape the Censure of needless Ostentation? For a Man is not presently to be condemned, who does not seek or embrace every possible Occasion of communicating. There may be some very allowable, and others even commendable, Reasons for absenting. If out of deep Humility and awful Reverence, or as a voluntary Punishment inflicted upon a Man's self for some grievous Relapse, he impose this Penance, or dread to come; the Respect paid to the Ordinance, or the holy Indignation conceived against himself, may be better accepted, and more becoming, than Receiving in such Circumstances. But this must not be so far indulged, that long Disuse should produce Indifference and Disregard for the Sacrament. For if once the Soul degenerate into Neglect and spiritual Sloth, all possible Endeavours must be used to awaken it. Not doubting but that God will be ever present with the Assistances of his Grace, and second thy Care with Success proportionable to thy

Vigor and Diligence, and the Sincerity of thy good Intentions.

But one thing must always be observed, that when the Hindrances to Communicating are real, and important, and necessary, not frivolous Excuses industriously sought, or readily laid hold on, to cover Impiety and Negligence, the Person so detained is present in Wish and Inclination, tho' not in actual Attendance. And then the Benefit of the Sacrament, and all the saving Effects of it, are as fully imparted to him as his Appearance in the Congregation, and the Elements themselves could have ensured them. For it is a great Mistake to imagine, that good Men receive not the Advantages of Christ's Body and Blood, except just then when they receive the outward and visible Signs of them. Every Day, every Hour, furnishes Opportunities of Communicating spiritually; and a Man thus composed can never be surprized, never find any Difficulty to comply with any Occasion of doing it publickly. For an innocent Life and a devout Mind are a constant Preparation. But when the usual Seasons return, and especially the solemn Festivals, wherein the great and glorious Mysteries of the Christian Religion are commemorated, then such a one will think it his Duty to join with the publick Assemblies in this sublimest Instance of Piety and Thanksgiving, he will approach with a Heart full of Affection and Reverence, and esteem this Homage due, not only to himself for the Comforts and Advantages he may expect from it, but more especially to Me, for the Honour and Tribute of Praise, by which my Name and Mercies ought to be thus magnified among Men. And this is a Fruit which can only redound to Me by open and visible Acts of Worship. Whereas the other of private Improvement and mystical Communion with Christ, is attained in secret, and constantly follows upon every religious Meditation concerning

cerning my Incarnation, and Sufferings, or any other of the myſterious Works, by which the Redemption of Mankind was compleated, and the pious Affections of Chriſtians are cheriſhed and inflamed.

They, who reſerve themſelves for the Feaſts of the Church only, and take no Care to put their Souls in a due Poſture for Receiving, except only when ſuch Solemnities call them to it, are ſeldom or never prepared as they ought to be. He is the ſafe, the happy Man, who makes it his frequent Practice, and conſtantly offers up himſelf a Sacrifice to his God. In the Act of communicating keep Rule and Order, and let not thy Haſte, or Impatience, the length of thy private Devotions, or any other Singularity of thy own Fancy, give Diſturbance to the common Uſages and Ceremonies of the Congregation, whereof thou art a Member. For take this along with thee, That, even in this Part of Worſhip, where Zeal and Devotion are moſt acceptable Ingredients, yet theſe very Qualifications, when indulged out of Seaſon and Meaſure, loſe all their Value; and are not half ſo pleaſing in the Sight of God, as unaffected Modeſty, and an humble decent Compliance with the eſtabliſh'd Orders and Cuſtoms of the Church, and the Convenience of others; who ought not to be diſturbed, or incommoded, for the fantaſtical or peculiar Ways of any private Perſon whatſoever.

Chap. XI.

The Benefit of Chriſt's Body and Blood.

Diſciple.] O Sweeteſt, deareſt Jeſus! Who can expreſs the Charms, the Tranſports, of that Soul, which feaſts with thee at thy Table; That Table,

Table, where no common Food is placed, but the Divine Entertainment of thy own Body and Blood? An Entertainment delicious, above all that Man can expreſs or imagine! What Satisfaction ſhould we take to come into thy Tabernacle, and fall low on our Knees before thy Footſtool, to open wide our Hearts for the Delights of thy Houſe, and, with *Mary Magdalen*, to waſh thy holy Feet with Tears of Love? But where, alas! is this Devotion to be found? Where are thoſe Eyes overflowing with pious Sorrow? Or, if that Sorrow be ſwallow'd up in Joy, yet ought we not even thus to approach thee with dry Eyes, but Tears of Joy ſhould trickle down apace, when we conſider our mighty Privilege, and the Happineſs of being admitted to thy bleſſed Preſence, and made Partakers of the Bliſs of Angels. For, as They really behold thy Face in Glory, ſo am I ſure to ſee, and to receive thee, in the myſtick Elements; tho' covered there under a different Form, and ſhrouded in a Veil of Bread and Wine.

I adore thy Goodneſs, which thus condeſcends to the Infirmities of Human Nature, and in much Compaſſion is pleaſed, under theſe ſenſible Repreſentations to hide that glorious Majeſty, whoſe Native Luſtre is too piercing bright, for Me, or any Created Being, to behold in its full Strength. But tho' my Eyes ſee thee not as thou art; yet here, I know, I have thee moſt effectually: And do therefore moſt humbly adore that Divinity on Earth, which Angels proſtrate themſelves before in Heaven. I do it through a Glaſs, and I gaze with the Eyes of Faith; They are permitted to do it *Face to Face, and to know even as they are known.* And, tho' this Glaſs be dark and dim, yet it is ſuch as I ought to be content with, ſince Mortality admits of nothing better; nor can I attain any higher Perfection, till the Day of Everlaſting Life dawn, and the thick Shadows of Figures are ſcattered

1 *Cor.* xiii.

tered by its Brightneſs. When that which is perfect ſhall come, then will all Uſe of Sacraments be ſuperſeded, and for ever ceaſe. For theſe are Remedies and Expedients, accommodated to a State of Frailty and Imperfection, ſuch as the Bleſſed above have no Occaſion for. They are in endleſs and unſpotted Perfection, and ever rejoicing in the Beams of thy glorious Preſence. They ſee thee as thou art, and are transformed into the Excellencies they ſee. 1 *John* iii. They taſte the Word made Fleſh, not in the Symbols of his Human Nature, but in the Native Charms of his Divine; as he was the Word of God from all Eternity, and ſhall continue ſo to be for ever.

When theſe Ideas, ſo full of Wonder, employ my Thoughts, I not only feel a generous Diſdain of Worldly Comforts, but am provoked to diſeſteem even thoſe ſpiritual and better Conſolations, which thy Grace at preſent diffuſes through my Soul. And all beſides ſeems poor and deſpicable, ſo long as I am debarred the ſight of my Love and Lord. Thou knoweſt the Secrets of my Heart, and wilt bear Teſtimony to the Sincerity of thoſe Profeſſions I make; when I declare, that nothing leſs than God, whom I moſt earneſtly long for ever to contemplate, can ſatisfy and fill the impatient Deſires of my enlarged Soul. But this, I know, is a Bleſſing, not to be obtained by Mortal Man, and therefore I will ſet myſelf with Patience to wait the time appointed for it. Thus did thy Saints of old, who now partake of the Joys and Kingdom of their Lord. Their Faith was vigorous, and their Perſeverance unſhaken, their Thirſtings eager, but their Patience exemplary and humble; till that Coming of their Lord, which they thought long, at laſt releaſed, and exalted them. My Hope, my Faith, are now the ſame, which theirs were then; and, I truſt, my Joy and Crown, ſhall by thy Grace and Mercy, be one Day the ſame too. Till that Day come,

come, I will tread in their Steps and support myself by the Contemplation of their bright Examples. Thy Holy Scriptures shall be my Comfort: In them, as in a Glass, I will view and adorn my Soul: And above all, thy Blessed Body and Blood shall be my Spiritual Sustenance. Here will I seek for Strength against Infirmities, here apply Balm to my Wounds, and Physick to my Diseases, and hither fly for Refuge, in all my Fears, and Dangers, and Temptations.

Two things are plainly necessary to the Preservation of Life, without which no Misery could be so insupportable, as that of living here. The Dismal Confinement of this Prison of Flesh can only be endured by the Help of Food and Light. Thy Mercy hath not left us destitute of this Provision; but kindly given thy holy Body for my Refreshment and Sustenance, and thy holy Word for *a Lantern unto my Feet, and a light unto my paths.* To these I owe, not my Comfort alone, but even my Life itself. For the Word of God is the Light of the Soul, and the Sacrament of his Death is the Bread of Life. These are the two Tables of the Christian, resembling those of the *Jewish* Church heretofore; where the Divine Treasures are exposed and preserved. The One, like that of the Shew-Bread, furnished most richly with the Symbols of thy precious Body; The Other, like the Repository of the Law containing Holy Doctrines, prescribing true and saving Faith, and leading us within the Veil to the most holy Place.

Psal. cxix.

Heb. ix.

All Honour, and Praise, and Thanksgiving, be to the Blessed Jesus, Light of Eternal Uncreated Light, for the Table of his Heavenly Doctrine, spread and adorned by the Ministry of his inspired Servants, the Prophets, Apostles, and other holy Writers, taught by Himself, that they might teach Us. All Glory and Thanks be to the great Creator and merciful Redeemer

deemer of Mankind, for his extenſive tender Love, in preparing a plenteous Feaſt for all the World. Not like that Paſchal Lamb of old, a Type and Shadow only, but the very Subſtance of that Shadow, the Accompliſhment of that Type; even *Chriſt our Paſſover ſacrificed for us*, and exhibited to us. This Bread ſuſtains, this Cup chears and rejoices the Hearts of the Faithful. It fills them with the overflowing Delights of Paradiſe, is a Pledge and Antepaſt of Heaven, and allowing for the Difference of Condition, admits us into Partnerſhip with Angels themſelves. The Joy of both is the ſame, though both cannot receive it in equal Proportions.

How high and honourable is that Function, to which God hath permitted, nay, enjoined to miniſter in theſe holy Things; to handle and deliver this bleſſed Bread, and give each Servant his Portion of Life by and with it, to implore with wonderful Efficacy the Divine Bleſſing, and exalt natural and common Things, to Purpoſes and Effects infinitely exceeding all the Powers of Nature? How clean ſhould thoſe Hands, how pure thoſe Lips, how chaſte and holy that Body be, which ſo frequently, ſo familiarly converſe with, and are united to, the Author and Perfection of all Purity? Sure nothing of corrupt Communication, nothing indecent, nothing idle or trifling, nothing but what may tend to edifying, ought to come out of that Mouth, which ſo often bleſſes, and conſecrates, and takes into it, the Sacrament of his dying Redeemer. How ſhould thoſe Eyes be turned away from Vanity, how immoveably fixed upon Heavenly Objects, which ſee their Lord's myſtical Body, and invite his peculiar Preſence, ſo frequently brought upon the Altar, by virtue of their being lifted up to the Throne of Grace, in Benedictions and Prayers of his own inſtituting?

To Men of this Profeſſion under the Law, no doubt that Precept was in a more eſpecial Manner intended,

Levit. xix. *Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy.* But sure the Sanctity and exemplary Lives of Priests under the Gospel ought as much to excel those of the Sons of *Aaron*, as our Ministration exceeds theirs in Glory. And therefore, grant thy Grace, O blessed God, to all who are admitted to this Holy Office; and Thou, who alone workest great Marvels, exert thy Almighty Power, in enabling every such Person to serve at thine Altar, with clean Hands, and a pure Heart, with a becoming Zeal, and moving Devotion; such as may not only suit their own Character, but be a Pattern and powerful Incitement to the Piety of others. And if we cannot, (as indeed we are still but Men, and in many things offend all) if we cannot stand before thee in pure unblemished Innocence, or come not up to all those eminent Degrees of Perfection, which we might and ought: Yet let at least our deep and godly Sorrow expiate our Offences; and our Resolutions of entire Reformation, and more conspicuous Piety and Devotion for the time to come. Our unfeigned Humility and Charity unconfined, and Labours indefatigable, make such Reparation, as thou wilt please to accept, for the Miscarriages occasioned by the Fraud and Malice of the Devil, or by our own Carnal Will and Frailness.

Chap. XII.

Of Preparation to the Communion.

Christ.] I Love Holiness, and I give what I love. A pure Heart is the thing I delight in, and this is the Place of my Rest. Furnish me thy largest Room, and I will come and

Luke xxii.

eat

eat the Paſſover at thy Houſe with my Diſciples. Purge out thy old Leaven, and dreſs up every Corner of thy Heart; ſweep it clean from the World, and all its Filth of thy Sins; if thou deſire that I ſhould come and make my abode with thee. Sit as a Sparrow alone upon the Houſe-top, and mourn in thy Cloſet for all the Tranſgreſſions wherein thou haſt exceeded; ſo will I be with thee, and comfort thee, in the Bitterneſs of thy Soul. Thy careful Preparation will be the natural Conſequence of thy Sincerity and Reſpect for Me. For every Lover provides his beſt Apartment to entertain his Friend, and beſt beloved; and, by his Diligence to receive ſo deſired a Gueſt, expreſſes the Truth and Greatneſs of his Affection.

But know withal, when thou haſt done thy utmoſt, that even whole Years, beſtowed in Preparation, cannot effect what in ſtrict Juſtice is my due. That thou art admitted to my Table, and received kindly there, is owing, after all, not to thy own Deſert, but to my Grace and Mercy, which accepts thy weak Endeavours, and paſſes by thy Sins and Unworthineſs. If Beggars with their Nakedneſs and Sores, have leave to ſit and feaſt with Princes; their Duty is, with Humility and Thankfulneſs, to acknowledge the mighty Favour. Do then thy part, and do it in the beſt manner thou canſt; do it diligently and heartily; Come not as by Compulſion, but come willingly and gladly; come not for Faſhion's ſake, but come with Reverence, and godly Fear, and fervent Zeal. When thy Saviour condeſcends to come to thee, refuſe him not, nor turn thy Back and flee from his Table. I have invited, I have commanded thee to come; Let not thy Infirmities diſcourage thee, for they are all perfectly known to Me; and I will conſider and allow for them, and what is wanting in Nature ſhall be ſupplied by Grace.

When

When thou feeleſt thy Heart burn with Love and Devotion, return thy Thanks to God for kindling theſe holy Fires. I did it, not becauſe thou art worthy of ſuch Grace, but becauſe I had Compaſſion on thy Weakneſs and thy Wants. When thou findeſt thyſelf cold and inſenſible in Religious Duties, double thy Diligence and thy Prayers, lament thy Deadneſs, and continue knocking. For if thou perſevere, and wilt take no Denial, thou ſhalt not aſk in vain, but be fed, at leaſt with the Crumbs that fall from thy Maſter's Table. Thou ſtandeſt in need of Me, but I have none of Thee. It is for thy Benefit, not my own, that I vouchſafe to meet thee at this Sacrament. Thou comeſt hither to be filled, and ſtrengthened, and ſanctified, to return better than thou cameſt, to receive Increaſe of Grace, to be one with me, and dwell in me; and thoſe, who come ſincerely diſpoſed to receive me, and amend their Life, I will in no wiſe ſend empty away. Do not then neglect thoſe precious Opportunities; Do not abſent, or come careleſly; but make me room in thy Heart, and let it be a clean and fit Reception for ſo pure a Gueſt, and He whom thou loveſt, will go home with thee to thy Houſe.

Matth. vii. and xv.

But then obſerve, that there is the ſame Neceſſity of Care and Watchfulneſs *after* this Sacrament,, as of Prayer and Preparation *before* it. For a conſtant virtuous Life, and ſtrict Guard over a Man's ſelf, are the beſt and moſt effectual Preparation to every Sacrament, and the ſureſt Means of obtaining more and greater Degrees of Grace. A Man, who preſently returns to the World, and gives himſelf a looſe to the Liberties and Affections, the Buſineſs and the Pleaſures of it, undoes what he hath taken Pains to do before; and defeats the good Effects of his moſt ſolemn Preparation. Be not fond of Variety of Company and Diverſions; nor laviſh and unwary in thy

Di-

Discourse; but rather chuse to retire into thy Chamber, and converse much with God in Solitude and Silence. When thou hast Him, thou hast a Treasure which nothing can take from thee. I am worthy of thee all, and I expect thee all. Divide not thyself between Me and the World, but let me be thy Love, thy Joy, thy Desire. *So shall thy Life be hid with Christ in God*; and though thou canst not live in thyself, yet thou shalt live in Me, full of Tranquility and Peace, far above the disorderly Passions and ruffling Cares of sensual and earthly minded Men. *Coloss.* iii.

Chap. XIII.

The Soul's Desire of Union with Christ.

Disciple.] I Hear thy gracious Words, my dearest Lord, and easily believe the inexpressible Happiness of them whose Souls thy heavenly Presence fills. But how; O! how shall I attain that Bliss? How shall I seek and find my God alone? how open my Heart to entertain thee, so as to exclude all other intruding Guests? O! that no Man, no Creature, might from henceforth find place in my Affections and Desires, so as to interrupt my Conversation with thee! When shall I break loose from Company and Care, and enjoy and talk with thee alone in Language free and kind, as that of dearest Friends; and soft and tender, sweet and charming, as the unreserved Retirements and endearing Whispers of the most passionate Lovers? This is my earnest Wish, this my constant Prayer, that my Heart may be knit entirely to thee; and weaned from every earthly and sensual Delight, learn to taste heavenly and eter-

nal Joys, by frequent Returns to thy Holy Communion. Ah when, my God, shall I be wholly thine, regardless of myself, swallowed up quite in a blissful indissoluble Union with Christ? *Thou, Lord, in Me, and I in Thee*; and thus may we continue One for ever!

John xvii.

Thou verily art my Beloved, my Chosen, the Chiefest among Ten Thousand, the Friend of my Bosom, with whom I desire to dwell all the Days of my Life. Thou art my Peace, and only Comfort; Without thee I find nothing but Labour and Sorrow, Vexation, and Torment, and Misery insupportable. Thou art a *God, that hidest thyself*; Not dealing thy Blessings promiscuously, but, with wise and just Distinction, satisfying the Humble and Meek with the Pleasures of thy Word, while thou concealest thy Counsel from the Wicked, and leavest them to groan and howl, in the Anguish and Horror of their guilty Souls! O how great is thy Bounty! how sweet thy Mercy! who refreshest thy hungry Servants with the delicious Bread, which came down from Heaven; that thy Faithful might eat thereof and not die. Surely there is no Nation under Heaven, which hath God so near to them, as the Lord our God is unto Us, in all that we call upon him for. For he *healeth the broken in Heart, he hath respect unto the Lowly*; he *lifteth the Simple out of the Dust, and raiseth the Needy from the Dunghill, to set them with Princes*, to equal them with Angels; nay, to give them his Flesh for the satisfying their Hunger, and, when they are thirsty, the Wine of his Blood to drink.

John vi. *Deut.* iv.

Psalm cxlvii, cxxxviii, cxiii.

What Society of Men can boast of Privileges, worthy to be named with those of the Christian Church? What Creature is there under Heaven, whose Excellence and Happiness is comparable to that of the Pious and Devout Soul, where God takes up his Residence, and sustains

sustains the Heart that entertains him, with his own glorious Body? O Grace unspeakable! O Condescension most amazing! O Love unmeasurable! Lord, what is Man, that thou should'st thus visit him? Or what can he render unto his God for these inestimable Benefits? Alas! I have no Return to make, but a poor worthless Heart. And this is yet a farther Instance of thy Goodness, that thou expectest no other Testimony of Gratitude, but myself, and my sincere Affection. Thus hast thou made our Duty our greatest Happiness: For then shall my Soul be glad, and all that is within me leap for Joy, when my Heart is perfectly united to my God. Then shalt thou say, *If thou wilt be mine, I will live and dwell with thee for ever:* And I with humble Joy reply, *Disdain not, Lord, this mean and homely dwelling, for I most willingly, most thankfully embrace the Offer. Lo I am thine intirely from this Moment, and, above all things, wish, and pray, that the Intimacy and Friendship thus contracted, may continue firm and inviolable, that nothing may abate our Love and the Delights of it, or ever part our Persons any more.*

Chap. XIV.

An Act of Exciting Devotion by the Example of Others.

Disciple.] *O How plentiful is thy Goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!* Psal. xxxi. When I reflect with what ardent Piety, with what affectionate Devotion, with what an eager Zeal, thy Saints approach this heavenly Supper; Shame and Confusion overwhelm me quite, conscious of my own, but lukewarm at the best, and too often perfectly stupid and frozen, Heart;

with what Indifference and Coldneſs I approach thy Myſteries, and how unaffected with thy Mercies, how unprofitable under the gracious Diſpenſation, I return! What a Reproach is it, that my Heart ſhould not be all inflamed with the Exceſs of thy Love; that I ſhould have no Senſe, no Apprehenſion, of my greateſt Happineſs; no Hungrings and Thirſtings after it? But, notwithſtanding the moving Examples of many excellent Perſons, ſhould ſtill continue void of all Impreſſions; ſo ſcandalouſly unlike thoſe pious Souls, whoſe Zeal overflow'd in Tears of Joy, whoſe Hearts as well as Mouths, drink greedily at this Fountain of Life, whoſe Appetites were ſo ſtrong as never to be ſatisfied, till they had filled themſelves with thy bleſſed Body, and fed liberally, and with a ſort of holy Luxury indulged, at the Celeſtial Banquet.

A Faith ſo eager, ſo exalted, plainly confeſſed they felt thy gracious Preſence; and that their Lord was known to them, as heretofore to the Diſciples at *Emmaus*, in *breaking of Bread*. The burning of their Hearts within them was an irrefragable Teſtimony of it. But how far ſhort, alas! do I come to their Zeal and Devotion? Look mercifully, Lord, upon my Infirmities. And, if an equal Portion of thy Grace be too great a Favour for thy poor unworthy Servant, yet grant me ſuch a Degree, ſuch a Senſe of thy Goodneſs and wonderful Love, that I may be as ſincerely, tho' not ſo ſtrongly, affected with it. If Raptures and Extaſies of Delight may not be my Portion, yet deny me not Improvement. But let my Faith be ſtrengthened, my Hope confirmed, my Love ſo warmed with this Sacrament, that, after having once taſted this heavenly Manna, I may never more deſire the *Onions and Garlick of Egypt*, nor in my Heart turn back from ſo good a God.

Luke xxiv.

I know thy Mercy and thy Power, to which nothing is impoſſible, nothing hard. I know thou canſt, and

and I hope in thy good Time thou wilt visit me with more abundant Measures of thy Grace, and fulfill all my Desire. This Confidence I cherish, because my very Desires are from thee. And it is some Comfort to me, that tho' I am sensible of my Weakness and my Wants, yet I long and pant after Supplies and Strength; that I am not content with my Misery, but labour and pray against my Defects, and would fain be better. And thus I will continue to do, till thou remove and vanquish my Frailties, inspire a bright and ardent Zeal, and make me a happy Partaker, first of the virtuous Disposition of thy devouter Saints, and then of their Reward and Happiness.

Chap. XV.

Grace is the Reward of Humility and Self-denial.

Christ.] Since thy Wishes are so commendable, and thy Desires of Grace sincere, I will instruct thee how thou shalt obtain it. Know then, this Blessing is suspended upon certain Conditions. It must be sought instantly, asked fervently, waited for patiently, received thankfully, preserved by Humility, improved with Diligence, and the Time and Measures of it submitted entirely to the Wisdom and Goodness of the heavenly Giver. If thou feel few or no Sparks of it in thy Mind, this is a proper Subject to exercise thy Meekness and godly Sorrow, but not to provoke Despair or immoderate Concern. For God frequently gives that in an Instant, and with a liberal Hand, which Men had long expected without Success: He gratifies their Constancy and Patience, their Importunity and Perseverance in Prayer, with Benefits, which

excellent Reasons moved him to deny to their first Requests, for the Petitioners mighty Advantage.

Should Mens earliest Expectations be answered, or prevented, the mighty Blessing would be too exquisite for frail Nature to bear. And therefore holy Raptures and exalted Virtue are wisely made the slow Fruit of long Time and much Patience. But when thy Desires are not fulfilled, when thou receivest no Increase, or when the Grace thou once enjoyedst is insensibly withdrawn; charge not God foolishly, but lament thy Sins, as the Occasion of this Unhappiness. A small Provocation may sometimes be a Bar to great Advantages. Tho' nothing indeed ought to be reputed small, which intercepts and hinders so valuable Blessings. But be it little or great, let it be thy Care to vanquish and remove this Obstruction, and then thy Heart's Desire shall be performed.

When once corrupt Self-love is subdued, and thy Soul entirely submitted and resigned to God, Peace and Satisfaction will flow in apace upon thy Mind. For nothing can be grievous and unpalatable to one, who hath renounced all Interests of his own, and hath no Inclinations or Desires left, but only that he may be made an Instrument of God's Glory, and have all the Counsel of the divine Will, which is always best, fulfilled in and upon him. This Man, so weaned from private Respects and all created Comforts, is in a proper Posture for receiving Grace, and tasting the spiritual Delights of Contemplation and Devotion. The Vessel must be empty before Grace can be poured in; and when it is perfectly so, God delights to fill it up to the Brim. The more a Man is dead to the World and himself, the more heavenly minded, the more mortified and humble, the swifter are the Motions of heavenly Grace towards him, the more liberal are its Distributions, the more sensible, and delightful, and wonderful its Comforts and Effects upon his Heart.

Then

Then shall he see the Loving-kindness of the Lord, then shall he feel his Soul and all its Powers enlarged, and even stand amazed at the happy Change. Lo! thus shall the Man be blessed that seareth and seeketh the Lord with all his Strength, and suffereth not his Heart to wander after Vanity. This Man shall receive the blessed Sacrament with wondrous Efficacy. He shall as truly be united to Christ in his Soul, as the Bread and Wine which represent him, are incorporated with the Substance of his Body. And that which inclines God to be so particularly propitious and bountiful to such a one, is that resigned Temper of Mind which proposes the Advancement of God's Honour and Glory, rather than his own Profit; and comes more out of a Sense of Duty and just Homage to his Saviour, than with a Prospect of Comfort and Satisfaction to himself.

Chap. XVI.

A Prayer for Relief in our Wants and Spiritual Distresses.

Disciple.] HEAR me, O sweetest, kindest Jesus, whom I now approach with most hearty Desires of receiving thee into my Soul. But how can I expect that thou wilt not despise a Place so unfit to entertain thy pure, thy glorious Majesty? Thou knowest, Lord, my Weaknesses and my Wants; how great my Sufferings, and how black my Sins; how I am oppressed and afflicted, tempted and overpowered; disordered with Passion, and stained with Pollution. To thee I fly for Succour against my Infirmities, for Physick against my Diseases, for Support under my Calamities and Distresses. I cannot dissemble my Con-

dition, I need not publish it, when addressing to one who knows all things, to whom my very inward Parts are naked and open; to him, who alone can give effectual Relief to my Sorrows, and supply my crying Necessities. Thy Wisdom knows what Succours are most seasonable and proper for my Circumstances, and how very slender and low my Stock of Virtue is.

Behold, I stand before thee a helpless Creature, *miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and weak*, imploring thy Grace, or at least some Fragments of it, to this hungry, starving Beggar. O let me not be famish'd, but revive this sinking Wretch with some Crumbs of heavenly Sustenance. Let me not perish with Cold, but warm me with thy Love; let me not fall into the Pit, but enlighten my blind Eyes with the Shine of thy gracious Presence. Give me a settled Distelish of worldly Pleasures, and make all here below insipid and bitter to me. Reconcile me to Crosses and Afflictions by Submission and steddy Patience, and lessen every thing in this World, whether Enjoyment or Suffering, by teaching me to despise and forget it. Raise my stupid Heart up to Heaven, and settle my Affections there, that they may no longer wildly rove after the trifling Objects of Flesh and Sense. Let me henceforth take delight in nothing but thee, nor *spend my Money and Labour for that which is not Bread*; for thou alone art *Meat indeed, and Drink indeed*; my Love and Joy, my Delight, and exceeding great Reward, my perfect and sole Good.

Rev. iii.

Isa. iv.

O that, now I am approaching the Throne of Grace, thou wouldst command thy divine Fire to descend from Heaven into my Soul! O that my Sins and corrupt Dispositions might be the Burnt-offering consumed by it! that it might flame, and burn, and melt me down, purge away all my Dross, and by the Violence of its powerful Heat, refine, and change, and incor-

incorporate me with thyself. Let me not, I beseech thee, be sent empty away; let me not return hungry and thirsty from so splendid an Entertainment, but work in me mightily, and deal bountifully with thy Servant, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy Name. I hope to find a wondrous Alteration, and cannot think it strange if I feel my benumbed Heart all sublimated when I come to that Fire, which ever burns without consuming; or if I find an entire Separation of all my worldly and gross Affections, when heated thoroughly with that Love, whose Excellence it is to purify the Heart by the Activity, and to enlighten blind Understandings by the Brightness of its Flame.

Chap. XVII.

An Act of Praise.

Disciple.] LOOK down, O Lord, with Favour and good Acceptance upon thy poor unworthy, but sincere Servant, now prostrating himself before thine Altar with a most devout Zeal, and all the passionate and tender Resentment of which my Heart is capable; wishing still that these good Affections were greater and more worthy of thee, and that I might meet and embrace my Lord with all that Perfection of Holiness and eager Joy, by which thy best and dearest Saints recommended their Prayers and Praises, and so eminently signalized themselves in the Celebration of this blessed Sacrament. O God! my Love and Life, my only and eternal Bliss, were but my Power proportioned to my Will, none of those excellent Patterns ever expressed more awful Reverence, more ardent Devotion, more eager Love, more humble

humble Gratitude, than I at this time am disposed, and most earnestly wish to express.

I know, O Lord, how far I am from being worthy to receive at thy Hand such plentiful Effusions of Grace, such distinguishing Marks of thy Kindness, as enabled them to be so pious and exemplary in all their Addresses to thee. But yet my Heart, and all its Affections, such as they are, I dedicate to thy Service. The utmost a devout Mind can conceive or desire, I offer in thy Presence with all possible Respect, with Sincerity as unfeigned, as if my Zeal were much more bright and fierce. I do it without the least Reserve; all I have and am is entirely thine, most freely consecrated to thy Use, my God and Lord, my almighty Creator, and most merciful Redeemer. Take then a full Possession of one, upon so many Accounts thy own. Enter, and dwell, and reign in me absolute and for ever. Behold, I open my Arms wide to embrace my Lord and Spouse. I desire at this time to receive thee into my Heart with the same Reverence and Humility, the same respectful Gratitude and Love, the same Faith and Hope, and chaste Desire, with which thy holy Mother received thee into her Virgin Womb, when she returned that pious Answer to the Angel who brought the glad Tidings of thy mysterious Incarnation, *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy Word.* *Luke* i.

And as thy Servant *John Baptist*, that greatest among them that are born of Women, thy Messenger sent to prepare thy Way before thee, felt the powerful Influence of the divine Presence, and confessed it, by leaping in his Mother's Womb for Joy; as he, ascribing nothing to himself, did afterwards declare himself the *Bridegroom's Friend, whose Joy was full in hearing the Bridegroom's Voice*; so do I desire to offer myself, without *Luke* i. *John* iii.

without any Exception, or regard to private Intereſt, and to rejoice and live in thee alone. May all the Zeal and Raptures, the Extaſies and heavenly Viſions of the Saints; may all their Virtues and their Praiſes; may every Creature in Heaven and Earth; may all that I have ever prayed for, and all that pray for me, contribute to thy Glory; and may thy Name be only and ever magnified by all and each of them.

Accept, O Lord, my hearty Wiſhes and Deſires of Praiſe and Thankſgiving, as infinite as thy Majeſty; for they are thine of right, and may'ſt thou be worthily bleſſed by them. This is, and ſhall be, my daily, hourly Prayer. Nor will I content myſelf with wiſhing and endeavouring this ſingly, and in my own Perſon, but do moſt ſeriouſly invite and conjure all the bleſſed Spirits above, all thy faithful People upon Earth, to join in this moſt juſt Tribute of Honour, and in full Conſort and perfect Harmony to publiſh thy Praiſe and Glory in all Times and Places.

Come all ye Nations and Countries, all Kindreds and Languages of the World, and bear your Parts in ſinging forth the ſweet, the ſaving, the holy Name of Jeſus. Raiſe your Devotions as high as human Nature can go, for you never can go far enough. And you devout Diſciples of this bleſſed Maſter, as oft as you receive this holy Sacrament, ſee that you reverently adore this Myſtery of Love. And then be ſure with a moſt fervent Faith and univerſal Charity to beſeech this gracious Saviour, that the Effect of his Death may be as general as the Deſign of it; that he who died for all, may be glorified in the Salvation of all. And may thoſe Supplications be ſucceſsful in obtaining Mercy for yourſelves, for every Sinner, and for me, the chief of Sinners in particular.

And when you return from this precious heavenly Feaſt full of Grace and Joy, remember then to look back

back with tender Compaſſion upon your weaker Brethren, and wiſh that every contrite and afflicted Soul may be admitted to the like Comforts, may feel the ſame wonderful Efficacy from this myſterious Table; and let not me, the leaſt and moſt unworthy of your Brethren, who want them moſt of any, be denied a Part in your charitable Interceſſions.

Chap. XVIII.

Againſt the nice Diſputes concerning this Sacrament.

Chriſt.] If thou wouldſt preſerve thy Faith uncorrupt, and thy Devotion from Diſtraction, content thyſelf with reverencing and admiring theſe holy Myſteries, and do not indulge a buſy Curioſity, in bold and unprofitable Enquiries concerning them. For this is the way to damp a godly Zeal, and to perplex thy Mind with intricate and endleſs Doubts. Remember *it is the Glory of God to conceal a thing*, and his ſuper-eminent Wiſdom and Power procures itſelf juſt Veneration, by doing more than Man is able to comprehend. I do not mean by this to exact a blind Obedience, but expect and commend the Uſe of Reaſon in the Search of divine Truth. Provided always that it be tempered with Sobriety and Modeſty, with Teachableneſs, and a due Reſpect to what I myſelf have revealed in my Word, and what my Church hath faithfully delivered in her Doctrines and Expoſitions upon it.

Prov. xxv. 2.

Happy is that Meekneſs and Poverty of Spirit, which induſtriouſly declines the rugged thorny Paths of Controverſy and captious Diſputes, and walks in the plain ſmooth Way of Duty and practical Religion, which ſtudies God's Commands, and labours to under-

underſtand Things of a Size with its Capacity, without troubling itſelf about his Doings and Decrees. Too many Inſtances there are of daring Men, who by preſuming to ſound the deep Things of Religion, have cavilled and argued themſelves out of all Religion. Theſe Men miſtake their Buſineſs. For the thing required of a Chriſtian, is not Penetration, and Subtilty of Wit, nice Diſtinctions, or ſublime Notions; but victorious Faith, and an honeſt holy Life; Sobriety, and Temperance, and Chaſtity, Juſtice and Charity, Piety and Devotion. How oft is Reaſon puzzled, even in Matters relating to Creatures inferior to thy ſelf? And will not this Reflection controul and cure an Expectation ſo extravagant and abſurd, as that of being able to give a clear Account of Things above thee; nay, of perfectly underſtanding thy great, thy infinite Creator himſelf? Submit thy Reaſon to Revelation, and let Humility and Deference to God recommend thy Faith; and then, tho' thou canſt not attain *all* Knowledge, yet thou ſhalt be ſure not to want *any* that is neceſſary or profitable for thee.

Many Men are much diſſatisfied in their Minds with Doubts concerning the Nature of true Faith, and Difficulties which ariſe concerning my Preſence in the Sacrament. Theſe Doubts are not always ſinful, nor always from themſelves; but frequently owing to the Temptations of the Devil, and induſtriouſly ſcattered by him with wicked Artifice and malicious Deſign. Be not therefore too anxious upon theſe Occaſions. Trouble not thyſelf to argue nicely, nor employ thy Thoughts upon the Matter, nor hold thyſelf concerned to be able to anſwer every Cavil which he puts into thy Head; but keep cloſe to Scripture, and do thy Duty, and the Enemy will ſoon retreat, when he finds thee neglect his Attempts. Think not theſe inward Diſtractions a Sign that thou art forſaken of God;

God; they are rather the contrary, and a Mark of Grace. God suffers them to exercise thy Patience, to try thy Constancy, to promote thy spiritual Advantage. Wert thou a Reprobate thou wouldst not thus be assaulted, for such the Devil is sure of already, and Temptations are thrown away upon them. They are the faithful, the sincere, the devout Christians, whom he teazes and torments; for in so doing he hopes to enlarge his Dominion, and to seduce those who were not his before.

Proceed then in thy Christian Course with Resolution and Patience, and still frequent the Sacrament with stedfast Faith and humble Reverence. Whatever there thou findest to exceed thy Understanding, put it to God's Account, and leave him to make it good, tho' thou canst not conceive how it should be done. He will not deceive thee; but they who rely upon their own Understandings are sure to deceive themselves. Remember God hath said, that *he walks and dwells with the Humble, and shews his Ways to the Meek*; *that he revealeth himself to Babes*; that he opens the Eyes of the Honest and Sincere, but hides his Grace and Knowledge from the Proud, and wise in their own Sight. Reason (Experience proves) may both deceive and be deceived, for it is but human; but Faith has God for its Foundation, and cannot err; because depending upon one who is Truth itself, incapable of mistaking, or of imposing upon others.

It is therefore highly fit, and in Matters of Religion absolutely necessary, that these two Principles should know their Order and respective Stations, and each contain itself within its proper Sphere. Faith (which supposes a Revelation received and acknowledged) challenges the highest Place; and Reason ought to keep her distance, to serve and follow after, not to set Bounds to, or assume, and encroach, and usurp over the other. For Faith and Charity are the two

Pillars

Pillars upon which Chriſtianity ſtands, the two governing Principles of a good Man's Opinions and Actions. And their Authority and Influence is in no one Inſtance more conſiderable than in this of the bleſſed Sacrament. God is infinite and eternal, his Power unbounded and incomprehenſible; he *does whatſoever pleaſeth him in Heaven and Earth*, and who can *underſtand his Counſel, or find out all his Methods?* If the Works of God were ſuch as human Reaſon could penetrate with eaſe, they would loſe great Part of their Glory; we ſhould ſoon abate of our Awe and Veneration for their Author, if his Dealings were not above the Power of our Tongues to expreſs, and the utmoſt Extent of our Imaginations to conceive.

O that Man would therefore praiſe the Lord for his Goodneſs, and confeſs the Wonders that he hath done for the Children of Men! For great and marvellous are thy Works, O Lord God Almighty! How unſearchable are thy Judgments, and thy Ways paſt finding out!

Pſal. cvii.

Rev. xiv.

Rom. xi.

THE END.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

READER.

THE Publiſhers of this Edition being deſirous to render this little Book as generally uſeful as it was poſſible, and conſidering that the two great Occaſions of extraordinary Devotion are the Seaſon of receiving the bleſſed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and that of Sickneſs; thought the former reaſonably well provided for in the Fourth Book of the foregoing Tranſlation, and engaged me to make ſome ſupplementary Proviſion for the latter. This I was the rather diſpoſed to do, in regard a great Part of that which follows lay by me, ſome Time ſince compoſed at the Requeſt of a Lady (now I hope with God) who deſired my Aſſiſtance in preparing ſome Meditations that might be proper for her then very weak and languiſhing Condition. The Manner in which they were drawn ſeemed not ill to ſuit with the Temper of the Author to which they are fixed. And the Deſign of caſting them into this Form, is to promote in ſome meaſure thoſe Reaſonings with a Man's own Mind, which at all Times indeed, but eſpecially in ſuch Circumſtances, would prove of excellent Advantage, if frequent Uſe did but render them more familiar.

I am far from thinking that theſe few Sheets have any Thing in them of equal Perfection with thoſe many pious and well-weighed Treatiſes written by others upon this Subject. Much leſs would I have the Reader imagine, that either this or thoſe can ſuperſede the Neceſſity and Benefit of the Prayers of the Church, and the Advice of our

spiritual Physicians. These ought always to be consulted in the first Place, before Matters come to Extremity; and a conscientious Person, after all his own Care, will find Business enough for them. But the Exercises of Piety prescribed in such Tracts will be good Helps, and fill up those Intervals very well, which the Languishings of a sick Bed many Times allow, when it cannot be expected that the ordinary Guides of our Souls should be ready with their Attendance. Whose Directions in the Measures of Mens Repentance, while under the afflicting Hand of God, and the proper Methods of expressing their Thankfulness when delivered from it, as well as their prudent Comforts administered to wounded and contrite Hearts, will notwithstanding be always seasonable and necessary.

The devout Christian, who converses much with the Word of God, and the Offices of the Church, will find himself able to make large Additions to the following Devotions. In which it was much more difficult to restrain my Pen, than to expatiate a great deal farther. But I considered the Condition of the Persons they were intended for; and therefore contented myself with such short Hints under each Head, as the Weakness of that would bear. If what I have offered here may tend to the promoting of Piety, and the sanctifying such Dispensations of Providence to any one of my Christian Brethren, by kindling in them a holy Zeal, and inspiring good Purposes, I have my End. And this, with God's Blessing, I hope it will, and heartily pray, that it may in some degree be capable of.

GEO. STANHOPE.

Medita-

Meditations and Prayers FOR SICK PERSONS.

MEDITATION I.

Upon Sickneſs in general, the Author, Cauſes, and End of it.

I. COME, my Soul, and let us reaſon together concerning the Things that have befallen us. This Body, to which thou art united, flags and droops; the Vigor of it is abated, its Beauty withered and waſted; the well-knit Limbs are grown feeble, and with great Difficulty ſuſtain their Weight, or obey thy Commands. They ſcarce perform any Offices aright; and when they do, it is with Pantings and Tremblings, with Wearineſs and Faintneſs. They ſeem to groan and ſink under their Burden; and each Member, which was formerly wont to ſerve thee with wonderful Chearfulneſs and Activity, now calls for Succours from abroad, and is no longer able to ſupport itſelf. This is ſuch a Change, as ought not to be felt only but well conſidered too. *Be not thou therefore like to Horſe and Mule, which have no Underſtanding*, but loſe all Impreſſions as ſoon as the Senſe of the Stroke ceaſes. It is thy *Pſ.* xxxii. 10.

Privilege and Duty both to reflect and ruminate; to call back Things already past, and anticipate those which are to come; and as for such as are actually present, to acquaint thyself with the Causes and Reasons the Ends and Uses of them, as well as with the Nature and Quality of the Things themselves. All these are Operations proper to a reasoning Soul, and the present Occasion calls upon thee for the Exercise of them all For thou canst not be sick, as becomes a Man and a Christian, without enquiring whence and wherefore it is that thou art so. The first and most necessary Step both toward the patient enduring of the Anguish, and the successful Application of the Remedies, is to learn the true Original of our Disease.

II. Know therefore most assuredly, that what the Holy Ghost hath spoken concerning Affliction in general, is in an especial Manner true concerning this particular Branch of it, *It cometh not forth out of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground.* Ourselves indeed were taken thence, and moulded into Man. But this was not the Effect of any natural Cause; the God of Nature, by his Almighty Power, commanded Earth and Ashes into this beauteous and wonderful Structure of human Body. And He alone, who created and formed it, commands it back into its native Dust again. Every Disease and Decay, whether it be the Effect of Accident or Time, whether what we usually call violent, and shortening our Days, or whether according to the Course of Nature, and slower Declinings of Age; all are but so many Shocks, by which this fleshly Tabernacle is shaken, or moulders by Degrees; and by growing more ruinous and uninhabitable, gives the Soul Warning to seek another Dwelling. And these are all disposed by a most steddy and particular Providence; and if traced up to their first Original, have a Cause as sublime

Job. v. 6.

as

as the Body itself hath. Nature indeed goes on in a smooth and settled Course; and so the Hand that guides this Engine is far distant, and seldom observed; but even Nature itself is God's Instrument, tho' the Process and the long Chain of Causes be so intricate, and withal so familiar, and frequently alike, that the Events resulting from thence cease to be marvellous in our Eyes. A Cold, or a Surfeit; a weak Constitution, or a foul Blood; unwholesome Diet, and ill Hours; Neglect of Means, and Carelessness of our Health; Advice taken too late, or a Medicine improper, or out of season; these are what we commonly charge our Indispositions and our Miscarriages upon. And thus far we may say true; but if we go no higher, we stop a great deal too soon. For it is easy to discern a Hand Above that directs and limits all these; that smites the Strong, and preserves the Tender; slays by the slightest Accidents, and recovers from the most desperate; and this in a manner most surprizing, such as no human Art or Skill had any Expectation, or can give any Account of.

III. If then thou hast convinced thyself that the Finger of God is in all these Things, pursue this Thought (my Soul) a little farther, and see what a fair and wide Scene of Knowledge and heavenly Wisdom it will soon open to thee. For what is God? Is not He that very Being infinitely powerful, and wise, and just, and good? Is it not He who made thee and sustains thee, the same who governs and disposes this whole World, and all the Creatures in it, after the Counsel of his own Will? He with whom the Lives of his Servants are exceeding precious? in whose Sight the Hairs of our Head are all numbered? without whose Permission not a Sparrow can fall to the Ground? and in whose Estimation the meanest of those that are made after his own Image are of infinitely more Value than

many Sparrows? Remember that such is the author of thy Disease; and this single Remembrance will lead thee to such Consequences, such holy and seasonable Reflections, as cannot, if duly attended and carefully improved, but work in thee that Frame of Mind which best suits thy present Circumstances, and must needs dispose thee to reap large and lasting Advantages from them. For how canst thou consider his Power, and not dread the dire Effects of an angry, or rest secure under the Favour and Protection of a reconciled God? or how his Wisdom, and not to be contented with his Chusings for thee? or how his Justice, and not be more zealously concerned to seek a Pardon for those Sins, which have provoked and made thee an Object of it? or how his Goodness, and not be even thankful under thy Sufferings? For what is grievous to Flesh and Blood, is yet ordained to excellent and heavenly Purposes, and it is out of very Kindness that thou art thus afflicted. How canst thou think upon his Right of Creation, without acknowledging of his Bounty, in giving and continuing thy Being, and all the Comforts of it? or how, lastly, upon his Preference of Mankind above the rest of the Creatures here below, without observing the peculiar Prerogative which renders Men more valuable, that of a noble and reasonable Soul, which the others want, and so cherishing the Hope of Immortality, where unto Man only, of all here below, is appointed? a Hope, which assures us we shall not perish, but only be changed; and in the midst of languishing and departing Struggles can bear up under, nay, can triumph over Agonies, and Death itself. Here then will I fix my Thoughts, I will come before the Almighty with a Song, and make my Prayer unto the God of my Life.

HYMN;

HYMN.

GOD is the Lord, even God alone: he killeth, and he maketh alive, he woundeth, and he healeth. *Deut.* xxxii. 39. 1 *Sam.* ii. 6.

Thou, Lord, haſt power of life and death: thou ſcourgeſt, and ſheweſt mercy; thou leadeſt to the gates of the grave, and bringeſt up again. *Wiſd.* xvi. 13. *Job* xiii. 2.

It is he that holdeth our ſoul in life: and ſuffereth not our feet to ſlip. *Pſal.* lxvi. 8.

And again, when we are miniſhed and brought low, thro' ſickneſs, thro' any affliction or ſorrow; cvii. 39, 40.

Tho' he ſuffer us to be evil intreated: yet helpeth he the meek out of miſery, or maketh all his bed in his ſickneſs. xli. 3.

For it is neither herb, nor mollifying plaiſter, that reſtoreth men to health: but thy word, O Lord, which healeth all things. *Wiſd.* xvi. 12.

My time is always in thy hand; unto God the Lord belong the iſſues of life and death. *Pſal.* xxxi. 17. lxviii. 20.

All creatures wait upon thee, when thou openeſt thy hand they are filled with good. civ. 27.

When thou ſendeſt forth thy Spirit they are created; when thou hideſt thy Face they are troubled; when thou takeſt away their breath they die, and are turned again to their duſt. 28. 29. 30.

I will ſing to the Lord as long as I live: I will praiſe my God while I have my being. 33.

My meditation of him ſhall be ſweet: and my Joy ſhall be in the Lord. 34.

When thou ſaidſt, Seek ye my Face: my heart ſaid unto me, Thy Face, Lord, will I ſeek. xxvii. 8.

O hide not thou thy Face from me: nor caſt away thy ſervant in diſpleaſure. 9.

Thou haſt been my helper: leave me not, neither forſake me, O God of my ſalvation. 10.

Pſal. xx. 7. *Some put their truſt in* Strength *of* Nature, *and* ſome in Medicines; *but I will remember the Name of the Lord our God.*

cxliv. 2. *O put not your truſt* (in Phyſicians, *nor*) *in any child of man, for there is no help in them.*

4. *But bleſſed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help: and whoſe hope is in the Lord his God.*

xx. 9. *Save, Lord, and hear me, O King of Heaven, when I call upon thee.*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, *&c.*
As it was in the Beginning, *&c.*

Prayer.

O Almighty God, the Father of the Spirits of all Fleſh, whoſe never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in Heaven and Earth; I deſire, with the profoundeſt Humility and Reverence, to proſtrate both Soul and Body before thee, begging that thou wouldſt give me Grace to behold and admire thy Doings in all thy Diſpenſations towards myſelf and all Mankind. I acknowledge it thy Bounty that I ever was at all, and adore thy Mercy and Long-ſuffering for preſerving me thus long in the Land of the Living. My many Days and Years of Health and Comfort were thy Gift, and the Recoveries from former Sickneſſes, as well as the Prevention of thoſe Dangers and Diſeaſes I never felt, are owing to thee alone. Man doth not live by Bread and Care, nor is relieved by Medicines only, but by the Word and Bleſſing which proceedeth out of the Mouth of God. Grant me, I beſeech thee, a ſtrong and due Senſe of my entire Dependance upon thee, and Grace to improve under, and behave myſelf in Conformity to that Perſuaſion. That whether the Means uſed for my Eaſe and Relief ſucceed, I may aſcribe all the Glory and Thanks to thee alone: Or whether thou thinkeſt fit to deny them their intended Effects, I may humble myſelf under thy mighty Hand, and remember that thou, Lord, haſt done it.

Inſpire

Inſpire me, I beſeech thee, with that true and heavenly Wiſdom, which may help me to diſcern aright the Reaſons, and enable me to anſwer the Ends of this Correction, and all other thy Dealings with me. That I may bear the Rod, and who hath appointed it; and in all Conditions ſubmit myſelf entirely to thy good Pleaſure, and glorify God in the Day of Viſitation. So ſhall this Weakneſs of my Body tend to the ſtrengthening of my Virtues, and the Health of my Soul, thro' the Merits of him who redeemed them both at the Price of his own Blood, even thy Son, and my ever bleſſed Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

MED. II.

Of the Power of God, and the Affections ariſing from thence, viz. *Dread of his Anger, and Truſt in his Protection.*

I. WHich way ſoever we turn our Eyes ten thouſand Objects meet us, which all prove and preach to us the almighty Power of God. The glorious Fabrick of the Univerſe, and every thing contained therein, nay, even the meaneſt, and in human Eſteem moſt deſpicable Creature, proclaims aloud the Omnipotence of its Maker. And the good Order in which theſe are contained, does as much magnify his preſerving, as their Exiſtence does his creating Power. But Man needs not look abroad, himſelf is ten thouſand Arguments to demonſtrate this to himſelf; the curious Structure of his Body, the Excellencies of its divine Inhabitant the Soul, and the marvellous amazing Union and mutual Correſpondence of both theſe, could be the Workmanſhip of nothing leſs than Omnipotence. This Mixture of Spirit and Matter, of periſhing

periſhing and immortal; the Sagacity of the one to influence and govern, the Readineſs of the other to obey and be actuated; the Sprightlineſs and Vigour, or elſe the Heavineſs and Diſorder, and reciprocal Diſabilities which each of theſe convey to the other, are moſt certainly the Lord's doing, and ought to be marvellous in our Eyes. Alas! how ſhould Man ſubſiſt one Moment, even in the State of his greateſt Perfection, did not this great Artificer watch over his own Work, and conſtantly ſuſtain it; did not he check and moderate that Conflict, which the warring Elements of our Body are continually engaging in? but eſpecially, now that the Corruption of our Nature, and the Tranſgreſſion of our firſt Parent, hath let Death and Diſeaſes looſe upon us, there needs no freſh Infliction. For if God be but paſſive, and withdraw his Reſtraint, the Enemy is always ready to devour us, and we carry the Seeds of our Torment and Ruin about our own Perſons. And God hath ſo decreed, that every Man ſhall once fall by the Stroke of Death. A Decree, which in our greateſt Strength, in the very Bloom and Beauty of Youth, contrary to our own Expectations, or the Fears of our tendereſt Friends, he ſometimes executes; to teach us, that our Being is wholly precarious; that we have nothing ſtable here, no Title even to Life itſelf; but are all concluded by a Sentence already paſſed. For all our Days are in the Nature of a Reprieve, the prolonging whereof is an Act of mere Mercy, as the cutting it ſhort is free from the leaſt Shadow of Injuſtice. God then cannot want Means and Opportunities for this. All Nature is his; the Malice of wicked Men, the Spight of our Foes, the miſtaken Kindneſs of our Friends, the Errors of our Phyſicians, and the Miſapplication of their Medicines, are all directed and over-ruled to this End. The Humours of our Bodies, the Temper of the Air, and every Element indeed when he gives the Word, turn Executioners;

cutioners; or in truth, if he but pleaſe to permit, the thing will do itſelf. He burns us up by Fevers, or drowns us in Dropſies; ſtrikes us dead in a Moment by Apoplexies, buries us alive by Palſies, or waſtes us by ſlow and imperceptible Degrees with lingering Conſumptions. Thou ſeeſt, my Soul, how eaſily God can do theſe things, by a thouſand Inſtances of Friends and Acquaintance gone before thee, and by thy own yet more ſenſible Experience, in this worn and languiſhing Body of thine, Thou feeleſt now that no Fleſh is able to ſtand before God, and how quickly we are blaſted by the Breath of his Diſpleaſure. That to him alone belongs Power and Strength, and to poor mortal Man nothing but Wretchedneſs, and Weakneſs, and Vanity.

II. Surely (my Soul) had theſe Impreſſions been freſh and deep upon me heretofore, they would have check'd my wild Career in Sin, and prevented many grievous and bold Tranſgreſſions, which I have Reaſon to fear might provoke the divine Majeſty to caſt me upon this Bed of languiſhing. For do we provoke the Lord to Jealouſy? Are we ſtronger than he? Alas! my own Condition hath taught me how vain and fool-hardy it is, not only to fight againſt God, but not to fear and ſtand in perpetual Awe of him: How fatal to play with this conſuming Fire: And I cannot but wiſh from the Bottom of my Soul, that I had better conſidered this Point long ago. For he is a terrible and a mighty God; and when he enters into Controverſy with Mankind, no Fleſh can abide it. At leaſt, my Soul, let us make that good uſe of this Reflection now, to be unfeignedly ſorry for what is paſt; and more cautious and obſervant for the Time to come. The Flower is withered indeed, and hangs its feeble Head; but it is not quite cut down. O let us yet humble ourſelves in his Fear, and conſider what a yet more dreadful Vengeance God hath in Store for hardened and unperſuadable Wretches. If the Decays

Decays and Pains of the Body alone are so grievous, how shall we bear the Loss of Body and Soul both? How shall we dwell with everlasting Burnings? If the Rod of God, these comparatively light Punishments, represent to us the Terrors of his angry Justice; who can bear the Approach of that dismal Day, when he shall come in Thunder and Flames to make an absolute End of this whole World, and deliver wicked Sinners over to irrecoverable Destruction? An Eternity of Torments! Jesus defend us! who can entertain even the most distant Thought of it without Trembling and Astonishment? Fall down then, my Soul, and humble thyself under the mighty Hand of God, that thou mayst not perish with this frail Body. Lose no Time in making thy Peace, but work with all thy Might, especially now that the Day of Life seems to decline, and the Night comes on, wherein no Man can work.

III. For remember, my Soul, for thy Encouragement, if thou abound in the Work of the Lord, thy Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. He is no less mighty to save than to destroy; with him no Word is impossible; and if he will, he can even yet raise this feeble Body, and restore it to perfect Health and Soundness. Nay he will certainly do it, if that be best for me; and if it be not, he will do yet more. For there will come a day in which this vile earthly Part shall be enlivened again; and if it crumble into Dust, and scatter in the mean while; tho' it pass thro' infinite different Forms, yet will he pursue this Body thro' all its Changes, collect its dispersed Particles, command the little Heaps of Dust to awake, and translate it into a glorious and a spiritual Body; a Body fit for a State of Incorruption, and the Inheritance of that Kingdom, where this Flesh and Blood, which we now set so false, so extravagant a Value upon, is not worthy to enter. I will therefore confirm myself in the Power and Promises of my

1 Cor. xx. 58.

1 Cor. xv.

my God, and with holy *Job*, *tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* For even then I will lay me down, in hope of a Resurrection to eternal Life, and commit my Body, like Seed, to the Ground, not to be lost, but improved, by corrupting there. For thou, O God, art unchangeable, and thy Promises without Repentance; and promised thou hast, that our vile body shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious Body, according to the mighty working, whereby thou art able to subdue all Things to thyself. *Job* xiii. 15. *Phil.* iii. 21.

Ejaculations.

IN thee therefore, O Lord, will I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion, but deliver me in thy righteousness, and save me. *Psalm* lxxi.

Be thou my strong-hold, whereunto I may alway resort: thou hast promised to help me, for thou art my house of defence, and my castle.

Deliver me, O my God, from the adversary's hand: preserve me from the hunter of souls.

He layeth snares, and is mighty to destroy: but yet the Lord, who dwelleth on high, is mightier.

Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for: thou hast been my hope even from my youth.

Thro' thee have I been holden up ever since I was born: thou art he that took me out of my mother's womb, my praise shall be always of thee.

O cast me not away in the time of my distress: forsake me not when my strength faileth me.

Let them be confounded and perish that are against my soul: let the wicked spirits be covered with shame and dishonour that seek to do me evil.

As for me, I will patiently tarry the Lord's leisure: and will put my trust in the Lord. *Ps.* xxvii. 16.

For

Job xix. 25. *For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the last day upon the earth.*

26. *And tho' after my skin worms destroy this Body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:*

27. *Whom I shall see for myself; and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.*

Job xi. 25. *For he is the Resurrection and the Life: and whosoever believeth in him, tho' he die, yet shall he live again.*

Glory be to the Father, *&c.*

As it was in the Beginning, *&c.*

Prayer.

O Most glorious Lord God, terrible in thy Judgments, and wonderful in all thy Dealings towards the Children of Men; possess my Soul, I beseech thee, with awful and becoming Apprehensions of thy Majesty; give me a serious Sense and Sorrow for ever having hardened my Heart from thy Fear, and provoked that Vengeance, which can consume me in a Moment. Lord, convince me whom I ought to dread, and let me never, for the gratifying any sinful Inclination, forget any more the Lord my Maker, and incur the Displeasure of him, who is able to cast both Body and Soul into Hell. And as I implore thy Grace, that this Consideration of thy Power may be an effectual Check to all my unruly Appetites; so I beseech thee, let it be my Stay and Confidence in all Dangers and Distresses. That, forsaking the broken Reeds of all worldly Succours, I may put my whole Trust in thy Mercy, and evermore serving thee in Holiness and Pureness of Living, may even in Death itself be more than Conqueror. Even in that joyful Day, when all Enemies shall be destroyed; when thy Children shall come forth from the dark Prisons of the Grave, and shine like Suns in the Kingdom of thee their Father. Grant this, thou Rock of my Soul, for thy dear Son Jesus Christ's sake.

Med. II.

Of the Justice of God, and the penitential Sorrow resulting from it.

I. GOD is a Being infinitely perfect and good, the supreme, the original Good, the Author and Maker of all Things, and cannot therefore be supposed either to hate what himself hath made, or to have given a Being to any Thing with a Design to render it miserable. His Providence and Power, which made the Subject of the two former Meditations, are in their own Nature and primitive Intention, calculated for the Benefit and Security of his Creatures. And if at any Time they become the Instruments or Dispensers of Grief and Pain, this is an Effect purely accidental, an Operation so foreign, that it is even extorted from him, and wholly imputable to some other Cause. And this is the Case of Mankind, once favoured above all their Fellow-creatures, and safe under the Shelter and Smiles of an Almighty Protector; but by their own Fault deprived of this Defence, left naked, and exposed to Mischiefs and Sufferings; and not only disarmed of their surest Guard, but in perpetual Danger of being destroyed by that very Hand which was formerly their Friend and Defender. O wretched Consequences of Sin! that did not only render our first Parents, and all their Posterity, liable to bodily Death, and all the Diseases and Pains that led to it, but left a fatal Averseness to all Good, and a strong Propension in us to all Evil. By indulging hereof we add our own actual Guilt to that which our sinful Parents had derived down to us, and by Iniquities without Number, by wilful, repeated, habitual and bold Transgressions, do confirm and aggravate this Sentence of Death, and arm the Justice of God against ourselves.

II. Wonder

II. Wonder not then if thou see so many dreadful Spectacles of Affliction in the World, nor murmur when thou thyself art bound in the same Fetters, and sore laden with the Burthen of Adversity. But remember that God is righteous, and thou and these People are wicked; that he is holy and just as well as good, tho' he do not willingly grieve the Children of Men, yet their Iniquities put a sort of Violence upon him, which he cannot resist. They quite weary him out, and render it impossible (that is, inconsistent with his other Attributes, and the Perfection of his Nature) to let such Men go always unpunished. Nay, even in those infinitely more dreadful Torments of another World, his Perfections are concern'd to vindicate themselves; for tho' these be terrible above what we are able to express or conceive, yet are they just. And at the same Time that we may be apt to question whether so great Severity be consistent with the Character of our Judge, we prove the Wisdom of our Lawgiver, and that even eternal Pains were necessary, since even all this will not contain us in our Duty, and effectually restrain us from sinning.

III. And this, my Soul, is thy Case. These everlasting Plagues are the deserved Wages of thy Wickedness. For, do but descend into thyself (as it becomes thee to do now more especially) and there take an exact Survey of thy Miseries and Frailties, thy raging Passions, and ungoverned Appetites; ask thyself what Abuses and Misemployments of Health thou hast been guilty of; whether thou have not neglected and forgot God and Heaven too much, and been too full of Care and Fondness for this present World; whether thou have not omited his Worship and Sacrament, and disregarded his Word; or whether these have not been frequented formally and coldly. Examine the Heaviness of thy Affections, the Wan-

derings

drings and Negligence of thy Mind in publick and private Devotions. [*Here it may be convenient to instance in any other Particular against our Duty to God.*] See again the Violation of Justice and Charity to thy Neighbour, whether thou hast faithfully discharged the Offices of the several Capacities and Relations God hath placed thee in; [*a Husband or Wife, a Master or Mistress, a Son or Daughter, a Magistrate, a Subject, a Parent, a Brother or Sister, and the like.*] If thou have not been guilty of gross and palpable Injustice in thy Dealings, yet hast thou done wrong to no Man's Soul, by ill Advice, or ill Example? nor to the Bodies of any, by Malice or Contempt, by ill Treatment, severe Usage, want of Compassion and Care for their Infirmities? What Reputations hast thou injured by Scandal and Censure, by false and uncharitable Judgments, by busy meddling with Matters that concern thee not; by officiously spreading, or too hastily believing ill Reports; by encouraging, repeating, and being pleased with detracting or severe Reflections? Or if by none of these, yet at least by neglecting to reprove or to discountenance a slanderous Tongue, and to deliver the Innocent from its secret Stabs? [*Here again be particular in any other Sins you have been guilty of against your Neighbour.*] Turn thy Eyes inward once more, and behold the Breaches of that Duty thou owest to thyself; the Intemperance and Irregularity of thy Desires; the Murmurings and Discontents; the Infirmities indulged; the Passions unsubdued; the Negligence in thy greatest Concern; the Love of unlawful, and the Abuse of lawful Diversions and Delights. These are Things so incident to our State, that no Man's Conscience can speak Peace to him in them all; and happy art thou in those, where thine condemns thee not. But know withal, that God is greater than thy Heart, and knoweth all things; he keeps exact Account of thy lurking Corrup- 1 *John* iii. 20.

tions and ſecret Faults; the unobſerved, or the long ſince forgotten, Miſdemeanors of thy Life; the black Catalogue whereof, could they be ſet before thee, would give a diſmal Proſpect, full of Horror and Confuſion, and intolerable Amazement. So that thou muſt of neceſſity acknowledge thyſelf a Maſs of Filth and Miſery; a Wretch, that if God ſhould enter into Judgment with thee, haſt reaſon to expect nothing better than Indignation and Fury; to be ſet up as a Mark of his Vengeance, and by ſome ſwift exemplary Deſtruction, ſwept violently away into the hoteſt Flames of Hell,

IV. Thus much I am ſadly ſenſible of, and do ſtand condemned out of my own Mouth. And thus far the Circumſtances of all Mankind are the ſame; that if God ſhould be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, the very beſt of us all could not abide it. But, bleſſed be God, tho' Matters are deplorable, they are not quite deſperate; for there is Mercy with him, and his Juſtice is ſatisfied. The Price and Purchaſe of our Souls is paid; our forfeit Lives are ranſom'd and redeem'd; our Ranſom in Value exceeds the whole World; even his own beloved and only begotten Son; who ſpared not his own Life, but willingly poured out his Soul to the Death; and is thereby become a Sacrifice and Atonement for the Sins of wretched Mortals. He hath publiſhed glad Tidings of Reconciliation and Repentance, of Pardon and Peace. He came to ſave Sinners, even the chief of Sinners. Our God willeth not the Death of any, provided they believe, and ſincerely obey him; not according to the Shekel of the Sanctuary, which requires unſinning Perfection; but after the Standard of the new Covenant, which allows for human Frailties, accepts Sorrow for the paſt, Amendment for the Time to come, a fervent Love of God, and honeſt Endeavours to ſerve him. This is a Saying worthy to be accepted

Pſ. cxxx. 3, 4.

cepted indeed; this is the Comfort and Confidence of poor returning Sinners. And while I can see by Faith the Penalty of eternal Damnation released, by Virtue of the Blood of this Lamb of God, slain to take away the Sins of the World, I will submit with Patience to the temporal Punishments inflicted by my provoked God; and thankfully accept the Sicknesses and Afflictions of this present Life, as so many Warnings and Calls to Repentance.

V. And sure (my Soul) we shall take care to make this good Use of them. For these are the Discipline of the Lord; and if after all that is come upon me for my evil Deeds, and for my great Trespasses, seeing that thou, my God, hast punished me less than my Iniquities deserve; if I should again break thy Commandments, thou would'st certainly be angry, till thou hadst utterly consumed me; and torment me so much the more, for neglecting so great Salvation; I take therefore this Chastisement with all possible Submission, and do with unfeigned Sorrow confess my manifold Offences. I implore thy Mercy, who art justly displeased with me; and since in the midst of Life we are in Death, I cry earnestly to thee for Succour; and beg, that howsoever thou thinkest fit to dispose of this corruptible Body, thou would'st look graciously upon me in thy dear Son, and not deliver my poor Soul into the bitter Pains of eternal Death; but pity and save me for Christ Jesus his sake. *Amen.* *Ezra* ix. 13.

Here may be repeated the xxxviii. *and* li. Psalms.

Then the Confession in the Communion-Service,

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, *&c.*

Or else the three Prayers at the End of the Commination.

O Lord, we beseech thee, *&c.*

O most mighty God, *&c.*

Turn thou me, O good Lord, *&c.*

After either of which, say as follows.

Prayer.

Visitation of the Sick. O *Most merciful God, who according to the Multitude of thy Mercies dost so put away the Sins of those who truly repent, that thou remembereſt them no more; Grant me, I beſeech thee, true Repentance and thy holy Spirit; and then open thine Eye of Mercy upon my languiſhing Condition, and give me Comfort of Pardon and Forgiveneſs. Renew in me, moſt loving Father, whatſoever hath been decayed by Fraud and Malice of the Devil, or by my own carnal Will and Frailneſs. Preſerve and continue me in the Unity of thy Church; guard me by thy Power from all the Aſſaults of the Tempter, and ſuffer him not to take Advantage of my Weakneſs. Conſider, I beſeech thee, my Contrition, accept my Tears, hear my own Prayers, and thoſe of others on my Behalf, and aſſuage my Pains, as ſhall ſeem to thee moſt expedient for me. In thy Mercy, O Lord, I put my full Truſt; in thy Mercy alone, and in the Merits and Sufferings of my crucified Saviour. Impute not, O Lord, unto me my former Sins, but ſtrengthen me with thy bleſſed Spirit; and whenever thou art pleaſed to take me hence, take me unto thy Favour, thro' the Merits of thy dearly beloved Son, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Amen.

Med. IV.

Of the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God.

1. WEre there no other Conſideration to compoſe the Mind, but that alone of our Sufferings being juſt, this ſhould in reaſon perſuade Meekneſs, and Patience, and Contentedneſs under them. For, as the Prophet urges very well; *Wherefore doth a mortal Man complain; even a Man for*

Lam. ii.

for the Punishment of his Sins? The Thief upon the Cross, notwithstanding all the hardning of his former profligate Life, yet pacified himself under his Pains, and reproved his reviling Companion with this Reflection, that they were under the *Condemnation justly, and received but the due Reward of their evil Deeds.* *Luke* xxiii. 41. But we have yet abundantly more to quiet our repining Thoughts, and silence all Complaints, when the Sharpness of an Affliction, or the Sufferings of a sick Bed would provoke us to Impatience. Our Sins have been many and great enough to make God our Enemy, and do cry but too loud for the utmost Rigors of his Vengeance; yet are not those Adversities the Wounds and Bruises of an Enemy, but the Chastisements of a Father. One that smites us indeed, but it is in Righteousness and Friendship, and only with a Design to reprove and reform us. Observe what heavenly Comforts the Apostle hath left behind, and how God himself hath explained the Nature and Intent of his own Dispensations. *Heb.* xii. *My Son, despise not thou the Chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him, For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with Sons; for what Son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? Furthermore, we have had Fathers of our Flesh which corrected us, and we gave them Reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits, and live? For they verily for a few Days chastened us after their own Pleasure, but he for our Profit, that we might be Partakers of his Holiness, Now no Chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.*

II. What now can more illuſtrate the Wiſdom of Providence, than the converting our bittereſt Calamities into Occaſions of our Virtue and Happineſs? and which of all our Calamities is more likely to contribute to our Reformation, than thoſe of Sickneſs and Pain? for theſe, by touching our own Perſons, are more ſenſible and grievous to be borne; and by puniſhing the Body, for the Sake and Service of which, moſt, if not all our Wickednesſes are committed, they meet with the very Cauſe, and go to the Root of the Diſeaſe, and ſo are beſt fitted to perfect the Cure. Our Phyſician of Souls is both ſkilful and kind, he will not give us over out of a cruel Indulgence to our own Eaſe. Our Father anſwers his Character, and gives ſeaſonable Correction to prevent our utter Undoing. But in all this there is the Prudence of the Phyſician mix'd with the Tenderneſs of the Parent. The one would not preſcribe the bittereſt Cup, unleſs he knew it neceſſary and beſt for us; and if our Circumſtances call for Correction, it is with Gentleneſs and Reluctance, with Pain and yearning of Bowels that the other ſcourges.

III. Do thou therefore, O my Soul, conſider who chuſes for thee, and learn to reſign thyſelf to his Diſpoſals; for they are the Appointments of one who is wiſer than thou, and who loves thee better than the tendereſt Mother could. Do thou likewiſe conſider why he chuſes for thee, and learn to improve under the ſeeming Harſhneſs of ſuch Diſpenſations. Take gladly the wholſome Phyſick, and ſecure a good Operation to thyſelf. Have no Deſires or Wiſhes of thy own, but with a conſtant Reſerve to the good Pleaſures of God, think and be aſſured that what he does is beſt; beſt in itſelf, and beſt for thee too, if thy own Fault obſtruct it not. Alas! we know not what to pray for as we ought, and ſhould therefore beg nothing poſitively, but that God would do what he ſees moſt expedient. Aſk therefore, my Soul, that he would make thee

thee an Inſtrument of his own Glory; that he would ſupport thee in theſe Trials, and not ſuffer thee to be tempted above that thou art able; that he would command all things to work together for thy Good; and for the reſt, take thy Saviour for thy Pattern, and as oft as thou prayeſt that the Cup may paſs from thee, be ſure forget not to add from the very Bottom of thy Soul, nevertheleſs, O Father, not my Will, but thine be done.

IV. And to render the Cup thou art now drinking as little unpalatable as may be, forget not alſo to ſuſtain thyſelf with the Comforts even of thy weakeſt Condition. Seriouſly obſerve how gracious the Lord is, how he hath not only ſpared when thou haſt deſerved Puniſhment, but in the very Midſt of his Wrath hath thought upon Mercy. If thy Pains be not perpetual, thank him for thy Intervals of Eaſe and Refreſhment; if they be not acute and extreme, thank him for the Abatement and Moderation of them. If thou canſt recruit thy feeble Spirits with Sleep, thank him for cloſing up thy Eyes in gentle reviving Slumbers; if he hold thy Eyes waking, thank him for the Opportunities of meditating and praying to him in the Night-ſeaſon; yea, thank him eſpecially for continuing to thee thy Underſtanding and thy Senſes; and that he hath given thee the Power and the Grace to make a good and holy Uſe of theſe; that the Length of thy Sickneſs hath been ſo much a larger Opportunity of preparing for that important Change, which, not this languiſhing Body of thine only, but alſo all thoſe thou leaveſt behind in full Health, and Beauty, and Vigour, muſt ſhortly undergo. If thou endureſt much, conſider this is a good Method of weaning thy Affections from the World, and making thee thirſt and pant more earneſtly after the laſting Joys of a better Place. If the tedious lingering Diſtemper aſſault, and almoſt weary out thy Patience, think how much rather this is to be choſen

than the raging Frenzies of a Fever, or the ſudden Stroke of an Apoplexy. Reflect upon the Condition of thoſe Wretches, who are ſnatch'd out of the World it may be in an Act of damning Sin, but however in an Inſtant, without ſo much as the Power or the Leiſure to ſeek Pardon or Peace, to commit their Souls to God, or ſo much as once implore his Mercy at the laſt Gaſp. O! what would they have given, how much more would they gladly have endured, to purchaſe this long Warning, theſe ſlow and ſolemn Approaches of Death, the happy Advantages thou now enjoyeſt of trimming thy Lamp, and putting thy Soul in readineſs to meet the Bridegroom at his coming! For tho' we ought indeed to expect him every Hour, even in our moſt confirm'd Health; yet well is it for that Servant who receives expreſs Notice of his Maſter's Approach, and takes care ſo to provide for it, as in zealous Prayers and eager Wiſhes to go out and meet him; and having on the Wedding-Garment, waits only for his laſt Call, to enter with him to the Marriage.

Ejaculations.

Pſ. xliii. 5, 6. *WHY art thou ſo heavy, O my Soul, why art thou ſo diſquieted within me? Still put thy truſt in God, for I will yet give him thanks, who is the help of my countenance, and my God.*

xviii. 18. *The Lord hath chaſtened and corrected me, but he hath not given me over unto deſtruction,*

cxix. 75. *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou of very faithfulneſs haſt cauſed me to be troubled.*

Lam. iii. 22. *It is of the Lord's mercies that I was not long ago conſumed: becauſe his compaſſions fail not.*

24. *The Lord is my portion, ſaith my Soul; therefore will I hope in him.*

It is good for a Man that he should constantly hope, and quietly wait for the Salvation of the Lord: for the Lord will not cast off for ever. 26.

But tho' he cause Grief, yet will he have Compassion, according to the Multitude of his Mercies. Yea, like as a Father pitieth his own Children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him. 31. 32. *Psal.* ciii. 13.

In the Multitude of the Sorrows which I have in my Heart, thy Comforts have refreshed my Soul. xciv. 19.

For, I know, that with thee there is Mercy: and with my God is plenteous Redemption. cxxx. 7.

O remember not my old Sins, but have Mercy upon me, and that soon, for I am come to great Misery. lxxix. 8.

Heal my Soul, which hath sinned against thee: and then let the Lord do what seemeth him good. xli. 4. 1 *Sam.* iii 18.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, *&c.*

As it was in the Beginning, *&c.*

PRAYER.

HEar me, Almighty and most merciful God and Saviour, extend thy accustomed Goodness to me thy poor Servant, now cast upon this Bed of Languishing, and grieved with Sickness. Sanctify, I beseech thee, this thy Fatherly Correction to me, and grant that I may receive it, with all the Patience and Submission of a Dutiful Child. I desire to acknowledge and adore thy Divine Wisdom and Goodness in every Dispensation of Providence towards me; and only beg, that thou wouldest keep me safe under all, and then use what Methods thou pleasest, of bringing me to thyself. Manifest thy Strength in my Weakness, Make even my feeble Condition an Instrument of thy Glory; and the more my outward Man decayeth, strengthen me, I beseech thee, so much the more continually, with thy Grace and holy Spirit in the Inner Man. Let the Sense of my Weakness and Strength to my Faith, add Seriousness

to

to my Repentance. That if it be thy good Pleasure to restore me to my former Health, I may lead the Residue of my Life in thy Fear, and to thy Glory; or else grant me so to take thy Visitation, that, after this painful Life ended, I may dwell with thee in Life Everlasting. For this, O Lord, is the chief, the most earnest Desire of my Soul; that whether I live, I may live unto the Lord; or whether I die, I may die unto the Lord; so that living and dying I may be thine, through Jesus Christ, my dear and only Saviour. Amen.

Med. V.

Upon Recovery from Sickness.

I. IF Dangers and Distresses awaken our Consideration, the Deliverance from them ought not to pass unobserved. The Judgments of God extort Complaints from us; and shall his Mercies be received in Silence? When he afflicts and wounds, we seek him early; and shall we forget him, when he refreshes and heals us? That sure were most unworthy, most reproachful. The rather so, because we are able to give ourselves a very plain and rational Account, how it comes to pass that we receive Evil at the Hand of God; But the good he vouchsafes us, furnishes just Matter no less of Wonder, than of Thankfulness. Death is the Punishment of Sin; The Diseases and Decays of our Bodies are so many Degrees of, and Advances toward the Death: And our Consciences can find no Difficuty in justifying these painful Dispensations. For none of us can descend into his own Breast, without discovering infinite personal Offences, which might provoke God to take this forfeit Life, and to cut us off in the midst of our Days. But when he forbears to do so, when he checks his Wrath, and suspends the Execution of that fatal Sentence gone out against

againſt us; We can diſcern no Reaſon for This in ourſelves, but muſt reſolve it all into the ſole, the undeſerved, Goodneſs of our compaſſionate and long ſuffering Lord,

And ſuch, my Soul, is now thy Caſe. Thou wert haſtening apace to the Regions of the Dead, and in Fear that thou ſhould'ſt be deprived of the Reſidue of thy Years. But when thou waſt almoſt *cut off with pining Sickneſs, and thine Eyes even failed with looking upward*; when thou *reckoned'ſt each Night and Morning*, that there would be *an End of thee*, upon Earth; then did the Lord ſtand by thee and *ſave thee*, even becauſe *he had a Favour unto thee.* *Iſa.* xxxviii. 12, 13. *Pſal.* xviii. 19.

II. Now, tho' this be the Condition common to all Mankind, that we contribute no part, to the Efficient or Meritorious Cauſe of ſuch Goodneſs; yet in the Final Cauſe we may and muſt bear a very conſiderable Part. We could not give the Bleſſing to ourſelves: We could not deſerve that Almighty God ſhould give it us: But it will lie upon us to take care, that ſuch Grace be not beſtowed in vain. In one reſpect indeed, and ſtrictly ſpeaking, neither This, nor any other of the Diſpenſations of Providence, can poſſibly be in vain. For ſome Effect they will of Neceſſity have, even with regard to Us. But, if they do not anſwer the good Purpoſes, for which they were deſigned, better were it for Us, that we had never received them at all. The lengthning out our Days, if we do not amend our Manners, is but the miniſtring freſh and larger Opportunities of adding yet more, to our Sins here, and to our Torments hereafter. And happier had it been, to have been ſwept away with a ſwift Deſtruction, than to be deliver'd from our Fears, and live ſuch a Life afterwards as is certain to render us more miſerable in the End. For every Mercy, every Eſcape, muſt be accounted for; and thoſe which

which are entertained unthankfully, will at length prove Curſes, inſtead of Bleſſings, to us. It will therefore become thee, my Soul, very ſeriouſly to conſider, wherein true Thankfulneſs conſiſts, and what are the Inſtances, by which it muſt be expreſs'd.

III. When Men do any ſignal Acts of Kindneſs to each other, the Receiver eſteems himſelf obliged to pay them back again, in ſome Service or Benefit as good. This is what Men cannot be excuſed from, provided fit Opportunities offer, and their Circumſtances enable them to do it. But when the Power of doing thus is wanting, we are ſenſible, that ſo much as falls ſhort in procuring a Friend's real Advantage, ought to be made up in all becoming Teſtimonies of Reſpect. In ſuch a Readineſs of Mind as plainly ſhews, that the Party does not, however, want the Will and hearty Deſire of returning ſuch Favours in kind, and to the full.

Now the ſame Rule of Equity muſt needs hold toward our great Benefactor in Heaven. He is indeed ſo great, that his All-ſufficiency can neither need, nor receive any Addition. And we are ſo very Poor and Impotent, that it were the Extremity of Vanity and Madneſs, to imagine ourſelves capable of adding to him. The utmoſt We can do, is ſo to demean ourſelves, that He, and all the World, may plainly perceive us duly ſenſible of his Bounty. Now this can be demonſtrated only by our conſtant and zealous Care, to pleaſe and honour him, by taking delight in the Obedience he hath enjoined us, and teſtifying, by our Practice, that we eſteem the Service of ſo liberal a Maſter our moſt reaſonable Duty, and perfect Freedom. Altho' therefore our Lips ought to ſet forth the Praiſes of the Lord, and his Kindneſs ſhould ever be in our Mouths; Yet are thoſe Praiſes never ſet forth effectually, yet is that Kindneſs never acknowledged as it ought, except our Lives and every Action publiſh it. The Profeſſions of Gratitude

Gratitude are of no Consideration in any Case, farther than they express the inward Sentiments of the Heart. That Heart cannot be truly grateful, which does not labour and study, by all proper Means, to approve itself to the Person, whose Debtor it is. And how this is to be done to Almighty God, his own Word hath informed us; by declaring, that the Man who truly *honours him*, will *order his Conversation aright*; that they who *love him* will give Testimony of their Affection, by *keeping his Commandments*; that *the Goodness and Forbearance of God* does (both in its natural and designed Tendency) *lead to Repentance*; that it even *constrains Men to live no longer to themselves*, but *to him who hath done so great things for them.*

Psal. l. 23. *John* xiv. 15. *Rom.* ii. iv. 2 *Cor.* v. 15.

IV. These are Reflections so self-evident, so very obvious and natural to every Man, that seldom are any remarkable Calamities undergone, or Deliverances obtained, without exciting them in our Minds. Few Wretches are so hardened in Wickedness, few so abandoned, and lost to all Sense of God and Goodness; but in the Seasons of Sickness and Danger, they see their past Follies with Displeasure, and discern the Reasonableness of forsaking them. But this is the general Unhappiness, this the great Fault of most Men, that such Remorse quickly wears off, and their good Intentions cool again. The Smart of the Rod ceases, and the Success of the Correction is lost with it. The Health of the Body grows more confirmed, and the Conscience hardens in proportion to the Constitution. And thus the Man returns to his old Vanities and Vices, with the same Unconcernedness, as before.

But, O my Soul, let it not be thus with Me. No. Let me look back, with great Seriousness, upon the Vows I made, when I was in Trouble; and consider, that

that these were not to be transient and occasional Resolutions; that they were intended for lasting Obligations, and cannot be sincerely discharged, unless they influence the Remainder of that Life, so graciously restored to me. I ought to look upon myself, as one raised from the Dead, and favoured with Life a second Time; that from henceforth I might employ and use the Gift to the Honour of the Giver, who hath thus, as it were, created me afresh. He saw it better, upon my Request, to continue me longer in this State of Trial; and I ought to give the more earnest Heed, that every Day added to my past Years may prove a higher Advance in Piety and Virtue; that none of my holy Purposes languish or die, as too many have formerly done; that this late Approach to the Grave may perpetually warn me of my Mortality; and that, whenever Death and Judgment shall actually overtake me, (as overtake me they most certainly will) I may not be found less provided to meet my Lord, than this last Summons left me.

For, can I reflect upon my late Weakness, and harbour an Imagination so vain, as that this Body, in its greatest Vigor, may promise itself an everlasting Continuance? Can I observe this Youth of mine renewed as the Eagle's, and attribute it to any other Cause, than the Almighty Power and Infinite Goodness of Him, who wounds and heals, who kills and makes alive, after the Counsel of his own Will? Can I acknowledge my present Recovery owing entirely to that Power and Goodness, and not discover the indispensible Engagements, which lie upon me, to make some suitable Return? And what Return is possible, what so proper, so acceptable, as that of a thankful Heart; a diligent Improvement of this Mercy; a Life, in every Part of it, entirely dedicated to Him, who hath strengthened his Title now yet more, and made it upon so many Accounts his own?

V. I will

V. I will therefore be frequently acting over again those solemn Exercises of Repentance, performed in the Bitterness of my Soul; and by the Repetition shew, that the good thoughts I entertained, continue to be the calm and settled Sense of my more composed Mind. I will strictly examine, what Fault is committed, what Duties neglected, or but slightly performed, what Abuses, or what Failures in a right Improvement of Health heretofore, might probably have provoked God, to cast me upon the Bed of Sickness, and reduce me to such Extremity of Suffering. I will thank the Lord for giving me Warning by this Affliction; but especially for touching and softning my Heart, and inspiring me with godly Sorrow and holy Purposes. And to my own Endeavours I will add my most fervent Prayers, that the Continuance of his Grace may, out of this painful Chastisement, produce the peaceable and blessed Fruits of Righteousness and faithful Perseverance. To this End I will not fail, frequently to renew my good Resolutions; to cherish and keep up in my Soul all heavenly Dispositions, by constant private Prayer and serious Reflection: by attending duly upon the Publick Worship; by reading, and hearing, and conscientiously applying God's Holy Word to my present Circumstances and Necessities; by letting slip none of the precious Opportunities for strengthening my Faith and other Christian Virtues, in the Sacrament of my dear Redeemer's Body and Blood. I will take heed to all my Ways, be upon thy Guard against all Temptations and Occasions of Sinning, moderate in my most lawful Pleasures and Enjoyments, and diligent in all the Duties, which the several Relations wherein I stand, and the State of Life to which I am appointed by Providence, require of me. *I will set a Watch before my Mouth, and keep the Door of my Lips that I offend not in my Tongue.* I will take heed, that I hurt not any Man, by Thought, Word, *Ps.* cxli. 3. xxxix. 1.

or Deed; but will extend my Charity, as I am able, to all Mankind, To the poor distressed Members of my Blessed Saviour, by such Succours, as Their Condition stands in need of, and mine qualifies me to give: To others, by my good Advice, and seasonable Instruction; To all, by my Prayers and good Wishes, and the powerful Motive of a Pious Example: And even to my Enemies, by Meekness and Forgiveness, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath had Compassion on Me. I will make it my Business to become every Day more in Love with Religion: and to make all with whom I converse so: that I may, in some Measure give a Check to the Abominations of this degenerate Age in which I live, and adorn the Doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, or at least save myself from this untoward Generation. In a word, I will be sure that the Sense of God's Mercies (of this Last in particular) may never depart out of my Mind; but live, and grow, and bring forth Fruit, and influence me powerfully, to the very last Hour of my Life.

VI. Nor think, my Soul, that any Resolutions can be too strict, any Endeavour too much, upon this Occasion. For, after *all that is come upon me for my evil Deeds, and for my great Trespass, seeing that my God hath punished me less than my Iniquities deserve, and hath given me such a Deliverance as This*; *Ezra* ix. 13. *Should I again break his Commandments, Would he not then be angry with me till he had consumed me, so that there should be no escaping? O Lord, my God, thou art righteous, for I remain yet escaped.* But let not, I beseech thee, this Mercy, by being forgotten or abused, turn to my utter and eternal Condemnation. For, that this must be the sad Consequence of such Ingratitude at last, not only thy Word hath told me, but I can plainly gather it from my own Reason and Experience. I feel what *Verse* 14. *Verse* 15.

Indig-

Indignation the Unkindneſs of Perſons, whom I have particularly obliged, kindles in my Breaſt; I find, that no Sort of Reſentment is more uneaſy, no Provocation harder to be borne, than that, which ariſes from the Injuries and Affronts of thoſe unworthy People, who preſume upon my Friendſhip to uſe me ill. And can I ſuppoſe, That the juſt and jealous God will not call them to a ſevere Account, who turn his Grace into Wantonneſs, and, when they live by Miracles of Bounty and Long-ſuffering, live ſo, as to diſhonour Him, and reproach the Patience that ſpared them? the more ſignal and particular his Goodneſs hath been, the heavier and more inſupportable, no doubt will be that *Wrath, which hardened and impenitent* Wretches *treaſure up to themſelves, againſt the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.* So that our Bleſſed Lord's Admonition to the impotent Man, is in Effect the Voice of Reaſon, and every Man's own Conſcience. Each Affliction, each Eſcape calling out loudly to the Receiver, *Sin no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto thee.* *Rom.* ii. 5. *John* v. 14.

And how indeed can it be expected, that infinitely worſe ſhould not come, when neither Severity will drive, nor Compaſſion and Kindneſs lead to Amendment, when neither Correcting, nor Sparing, can do any good? The Circumſtances of thoſe Men are dangerous, whoſe Diſtemper only is ſtrong; But Theirs muſt needs be deſperate and mortal, whoſe very Remedies feed and inflame their Diſeaſe. If Pruning and Manuring be both in vain, the next Sentence upon the barren Fig-tree is, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground?* The Axe is already laid to the Root, and if it be lifted up to give the fatal Stroke, the End of *every Tree, which bringeth not forth good Fruit*, we are expreſly told ſhall be, *to be burnt with unquenchable Fire.* *Luke* xiii. *Matth.* iii.

VII. These Things, and sundry others, which will be apt upon such Occasions to offer themselves, if apply'd well and warmly to my Conscience, will have a very great and happy force, in forming my Disposition, and regulating my Conduct, for the time to come. The Recollection of God's abundant Mercies will inflame my Breast with holy Gratitude and fervent Love; such as would keep me ever passionately desirous, to pay the just Tribute of my best Service in return, and chearfully to run the way of his Commandments. The Remembrance of his Judgments will possess me with an awful Fear of displeasing him, and convince me, by my own Experience, that no Flesh can stand before him, when he is angry. My late Languishings and feeble Condition, will be a seasonable and lively Admonition, what this frail mortal Nature is; These will teach me to die daily to the World, as a Person, who hath here no continuing City, but ought to seek one to come. A Person, who must not, from even the most confirmed Health, entertain any such fond Prospects and vain Confidences of long Life, as may tempt me to presume Death and Judgment at a great distance, and myself secured against any Surprize from them, Much rather ought I to expect them every Moment; and, both from the Daily Spectacles of Mortality in my Neighbours, and the sensible Decays, or sudden Changes which happen to myself, quicken my Preparation to meet that Lord, who hath *compared himself to a Thief in the Night*, and foretold us, that he *will come in such an hour as we think not*. Thus shall I, by a true Christian Prudence, extract Spiritual Advantage out of Temporal Evils; discern the Goodness and Wisdom of Providence, even in the most afflicting Dispensations; convert the Pains and Diseases of a vile perishing Body, into Instruments of Strength and Health to my Immortal Soul; and have a happy

Psal. lxxvi.

Heb. xii.

Matth. xxiv. 43, 44,

Oc-

Occasion of acknowledging with *David*, that *it is good for me to have been in trouble*, *Ps.* cxix. 71. since by that *I have learnt*, more diligently to practise, more stedfastly to persevere in, *the Statutes of my God.*

HYMN.

PRaise the Lord, O my Soul; and all that *Psal.* ciii. 1.
is within me praise his holy Name.

Praise the Lord, O my Soul; and forget 2.
not all his Benefits.

Who can express the noble Acts of the cvi. 2.
Lord; or shew forth all his Praise?

Which forgiveth all thy Sins: and healeth ciii. 3.
all thine Infirmities.

Which saveth thy Life from Destruction: 4.
and crowneth thee with Mercy and Loving-kindness.

Which satisfieth thy Mouth with good 5.
things; making thee young and lusty as an Eagle?

For his Arrows stuck fast in me: and his xxxviii. 2.
Hand pressed me sore,

There was no Health in my Flesh, because 3.
of his Displeasure: neither was there any Rest in my Bones, by reason of my Sin.

My Soul abhorred all manner of Meat: cvii. 18.
and I was even hard at Death's Door:

Then cried I unto thee, O Lord: and got xxx. 8.
me to my Lord right humbly.

I said, O my God, take me not away in the cii. 24.
midst of mine Age: as for thy Years they endure throughout all Generations.

But what profit is there in my Blood, when xxx. 9.
I go down to the Pit?

Hear my Prayer then, O Lord, and with xxxix. 13.
thine Ears consider my Calling: hold not thy Peace at my Tears.

Pſ. xxxix. 15. *O ſpare me a little, that I may recovor my Strength: before I go hence, and be no more ſeen.*

cvii. 19. *So when I cried unto the Lord in my Trouble: he delivered me out of my Diſtreſs.*

20. *He ſent his word, and healed me, and I was ſaved from Deſtruction.*

lxxi. 18. *O! what great Troubles and Adverſities haſt thou ſhewed me, and yet didſt thou turn and quicken me: Yea, and broughteſt me from the deep of the Earth again.*

20. *Therefore will I praiſe thee and thy Faith-*

i. 14. *fulneſs, O God: I will offer unto my God Thankſgiving, and pay my Vows unto the moſt Higheſt.*

Iſ. xxxviii. 18. *For the Grave cannot praiſe thee, Death cannot celebrate thee: They that go down to the Pit cannot declare thy Truth.*

19. *But the Living, the Living he ſhall praiſe thee, as I do this Day: the Father to the Children ſhall make known the Goodneſs of the Lord.*

Pſal. ix. 10. *And they that know thy Name, will put their Truſt in thee: for thou, Lord, haſt never failed them that ſeek thee.*

cix. 29. *As for me, I will give great Thanks unto the Lord with my Mouth; and praiſe him among the Multitude.*

lxvi. 14. *O come hither and hearken all ye that fear God: and I will tell you what he hath done for my Soul.*

lxxviii. 15. *I was in miſery, and like unto him that is*

xxxiv. 4. *at the point to die: but he delivered me out of all my fear.*

xciv. 17. *If the Lord had not helped me: it had not failed, but my Soul had been put to ſilence.*

18. *But when I ſaid, my Foot hath ſlipped: thy Mercy, O Lord, held me up.*

Thou

Thou haſt turned my Heavineſs into Joy: thou haſt put off my Sackcloth, and girded me with Gladneſs. xxx. 11.

The Lord is my Strength and my Shield, my Heart hath truſted in him, and I am delivered; therefore my Heart danceth for Joy, and in my Song will I praiſe him. xxviii. 8.

O how plentiful is thy Goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for them that love thee: and that thou haſt prepared for them that put their truſt in thee, even before the Sons of Men! xxxi. 21.

O ye that love the Lord, ſee that ye hate the thing which is evil: the Lord preſerveth the Souls of the Faithful, he delivereth them from the Hand of the Wicked One. xcvii. 10.

His Mercy and Truth ſhall follow me all the Days of my Life: and I will dwell in the Houſe of the Lord for ever. xxiii. 6.

I will keep the Ways of the Lord: and will not forſake my God as the Wicked doth. xviii. 21.

For I have an Eye unto all his Laws, and will not caſt out his Commandments from me. 22.

Praiſed be the Lord, who hath not caſt out my Prayer: nor turned his Mercy from me. lxvi. 18.

Yea, bleſſed be the Lord God, even the God of Iſrael: which only doth wondrous things: lxxii. 18.

And bleſſed be the Name of his Majeſty for ever, and let all the Earth be filled with his Majeſty. Amen, Amen. 19.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghoſt.
As it was in the Beginning, is now, and
ever ſhall be: World without end. *Amen.*

After this Hymn, the Reader may enlarge his Meditations to the ſame purpoſe, by repeating the xxx, lxxi, lxxvii, cxvi, cxviii. Pſalms.

Prayer.

O Most mighty God and merciful Father, Wonderful in thy Doings, and Gracious in all thy Dispensations toward the Children of Men; I thy unworthy Servant prostrate myself before thee, with all the fervent Affections of a grateful Breast, acknowledging it thy Goodness, that I was not long ago consumed. Thou, Lord, hast chastened and corrected me, but thou hast not given me over unto Death. *Blessed therefore be that Divine Wisdom, which saw this late Affliction seasonable, and would not suffer me to perish in my Folly, for want of such necessary Warning. Blessed be that tender Compassion, which in the midst of Wrath remembered Mercy, which made all my Bed in my Sickness, which passed by my Impatience, and many Infirmities; and inclined a willing Ear, to the wandring and discomposed Supplications, of a poor feeble Wretch, when he cried unto thee in his Extreme Anguish and Distress. Blessed be the powerful Influences of that Grace, which disposed my Heart to Consideration and Repentance. But above all, blessed for ever be that Power and Goodness which, by sparing me, when I had deserved to be utterly cut off, hath given me Opportunity to make good those Holy Resolutions, which thy Grace inspired, when I was in trouble. Lord, let this Goodness of thine, and my own serious Purposes of Amendment, never slip out of my Mind; but preserve in me a constant tender Sense of the indispensible Obligations I lie under to better Obedience. Make me every day more and more zealous in promoting thy Glory, and the Good of my Brethren: As a Person saved from Destruction, for this very End, that the Remainder of my Life should be employed in the Service of my gracious Deliverer. In this Sense, O my God, I humbly offer and present unto thee this Soul and Body rescued from Hell and the Grave; Beseeching thee to keep them thine for ever. O let not the Return of my Health produce a Relapse into my former Sins; but become an Instrument of thy greater Honour, of my own*

stricter

ſtricter and more ſtedfaſt Virtue here, and my more exquiſite Happineſs hereafter. O! that the Talents of Time and Ability to do good, which have been heretofore ſo wretchedly neglected, may (now they are afreſh committed to my Truſt) be, for the Time to come, ſo faithfully improved, that the ſhining Graces of an exemplary Converſation may hold ſome Proportion with the Bleſſings I have been ſo particularly favoured withal. Let theſe excite, not me only, but others alſo, by my Example, to love thee more fervently, to ſerve thee more chearfully, to truſt in thee more aſſuredly. In Thee, O Lord, who ſheweſt us thy Goodneſs ſo plenteouſly, *and* daily poureſt thy Benefits upon us, *In Thee, who* never faileſt nor forſakeſt them that ſeek thee, *In thee, whoſe* Mercies are ſweet, *whoſe* Loving-kindneſs is better than Life itſelf, whoſe Service is perfect Freedom, *and* in keeping whoſe Commandments there is exceeding great Reward.

Pſal. lxviii. 19. ix. 10. lxvii. 4. xix. 11,

To this End, ſanctify, I beſeech thee, all the Methods of thy Providence to the Salvation of my Immortal Soul; And eſpecially, let not thy abuſed Mercies ever riſe up in Judgment againſt me. O! may my paſt Sufferings work in me great Humility and godly Fear; that from them I may confirm myſelf in Faith and Patience, and an entire Reſignation to thy Will, and wiſer Choices for me. Bring back frequently to my remembrance the Promiſes and Supplications, poured out in the Bitterneſs of my Soul; that thoſe ſucceſsful Addreſſes to the Throne of Grace, may ſtir me up effectually, to the paying what I then ſo ſolemnly vowed. Open thou my Lips, *O Lord, that my Mouth* may declare thy Mercy and Truth as long as I live, *And* praiſe my God, while I have any Being. *And, foraſmuch as this Recovery is only the lengthening out a little that Span of Life, which muſt ſhortly have an End; Suffer me not, I pray thee, to forget, that* I am a Stranger upon Earth; *but help me ſo to diſtrange my Heart from theſe Things here below, which my*

Pſal. civ. 33.

own late Experience hath taught me, cannot profit in the Day of Wrath; *that my Hopes and Affections may be unalterably fixed upon those better and eternal* Treasures *which* thou hast prepared for them that love thee. *Let the Thoughts and certain Expectation of Death and Judgment be so constantly, so powerfully present to my Soul, that in* what Hour soever my Lord shall come, *I may be found ready to meet him, and to* go with him to the Marriage. *Even so, blessed Jesus, Grant me in such manner to* pass through things Temporal, that I finally lose not the things Eternal; *but that I may use and improve thy Grace here, till Grace at last be swallowed up in Glory, and I translated to my Master's Joy. All which I beg for thy own Merits sake, my only Mediator and Redeemer: To whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, as is most due, from Me, and every Creature, all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, Thanksgiving and Praise, and humble Adoration, henceforth and for evermore.* Amen.

Med. VI.

Of Death.

Heb. ix. 27. *It is appointed for all Men once to Die, and after that the Judgment.* So says the Spirit of God himself; and what is thus appointed, none can reverse, none can escape. That then, which remains for Us, who lie under this Sentence, to do, is only to endeavour, that we may die, as becomes Men and Christians: that is, as Persons, who *2 Cor.* v. 10. expect to render an Account of the things done in this Body, and to Receive a recompence accordingly, whether it be Good or Bad. But who may abide that Day? Or who shall stand, when the Lord appeareth? Who indeed; when not only the Thing itself, but the very Apprehensions, and especially the Approaches, of it are so dreadful? For what is more ter-

terrible to mortal Man than dying? and what more so to sinful Man than being judged? But yet, my Soul, since these must unavoidably come, let us see what Course can be taken to soften a little and reconcile us to them; nay, let us try if it be not possible not only to bear them contentedly, but even to meet them gladly.

II. If Death be considered in itself, it is no more than what all the living Creation here below undergo in common with ourselves. And what is dying? it is a ceasing to live after the manner we now do; it is a Removal, or rather an Escape from a World of Misfortunes and Miseries, of Sorrow and Disquiet, of Malice and Deceit, Noise and Contention, of Pains and Anguish, of Crosses and Disappointments, of Vanity and Vexation; and, which is worst of all, of Temptation and Sin. It is doing that once for all, which we have done in part a thousand Times already, by Sicknesses and Faintings, by the Decays and Infirmities of Nature, and by the Loss of tendrest Relations, who tore away our very Heart with them. In short, the present Life, even to the Prosperous, will be found upon a just Computation to have made a very unequal Distribution; for even such have a larger Proportion of Trouble than of Happiness. But to the generality of Mankind it is a rough tempestuous Sea, and Death is the making their Port, or at least retiring into the Shelter of a Creek, where Storms can reach and annoy them no more. These are not affected Strains of Philosophy, but weigh'd and measur'd Truth, such as every Man is, or may be sadly convinced of at his own Expence, The only Deceit arises from our natural Fondness for living, which God hath wisely infused and woven into our Souls, that we might sustain our present Calamities the better. As on the other hand, he hath made Faith of a future State our Virtue, and ordain'd the Miseries of the present Life as an Exercise for that Virtue,

that both together might be a Balance at leaſt againſt the objects of Senſe, draw off our Affections from a Place which was never intended for our Reſt, and raiſe our Deſires up to thoſe better things provided for us in another World. And ſurely if this Matter were well weigh'd, however timorous Nature may ſtart and boggle at firſt, yet it would be no hard matter to come cloſe up to Death, and by the help of familiar Practice and prudent pious Meditation, to render not only the Thoughts of it, but even the thing itſelf very tolerable to us.

III. But if we conſider Death in another Capacity, as leading and keeping us cloſe Priſoners to a juſt and terrible Judgment; thus it hath a Sting indeed, which is the Senſe of Guilt and Sin unpardon'd; this is what nothing can relieve, but the Comforts ariſing from true Repentance, from a Saviour ſacrificed to expiate, and make full Satisfaction for our Offences, from a Title to our Part in that Expiation, and Favour of a reconciled God; and theſe I hope, are Comforts which belong to me; for do but hear and obſerve (my Soul) what reviving words the holy Spirit hath ſpoken to this purpoſe: *If any Man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.* Chriſt hath dy'd, who is he that condemneth? Yea, Chriſt is riſen again, and ſeated at the Right-hand of God, a perpetual Interceſſor, and a mighty Saviour to all them that come to God by him. He hath told thee, that what the Infirmity of the Law and the Fleſh could not do, Chriſt hath done for us; that he knows and hath felt our Weakneſſes, and will not fail to make large and very gracious Allowances for them; that Jeſus hath waſhed us in his own Blood, and tho' our Sins be as Scarlet, yet upon our true Repentance they ſhall be white as Snow. Look up then, and

1 *John* ii. 1, 2.

Rom. viii.

Heb. ii, & iv.

Rev. i. 5.
Iſa. i. 18.

and see thy Lord coming in the Clouds: thou must be judg'd it is true, but thy Redeemer shall be thy Judge; and to whose Decision would'st thou chuse to stand, but to thy best Friend's? to him, who lov'd thee so dearly as to die for thee, to be made Sin and a Curse for thee, that thou mightest be made the Righteousness of God in him? This is thy sure Confidence; and Heaven and Earth may pass away, but his Merits and Promises can never fail; and he hath promised, that all who repent and believe, and serve and love him, shall be saved in that Day, and be where he is, to behold his Glory; nay, not to behold only, but to enjoy it; to live and reign with the Son of God himself; for such he hath made Sons also, Heirs of God, and Joint-heirs with Christ, of an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in the Heavens; and if I know that I love God, I know that I shall be with him, and be like him, and see him as he is.

John xvii.

Rom, viii. 17.

1 *Pet.* i. 4.
1 *John* iii. 2.

IV. O glorious Day, which shall bring me to the full and inseparable Enjoyment of my dearest Saviour and most merciful God, when this Veil of Flesh shall be done away, and spiritual Joy, and Peace, and Knowledge, and Love, shall for ever abound! Blessed be thy Name, O God, who hast opened an Entrance into such Bliss for poor returning Sinners? Blessed be thy Bounty, who hast ordained such an infinite Recompence for our imperfect and unworthy Labours! And if thou hast decreed withal, that I must pass thro' the Regions of Darkness and Death, to come at those Seats of Light and Glory, shall I grudge this Passage? When I have borne the Heat and Burthen of the Day, shall I mourn because Even is come, and shrink back when I am called to receive my Wages? Some Difficulties I know there are; but thou, O Lord, wilt strengthen my Faith; and

and not ſuffer me to faint under the Terrors and Struggles of my laſt Trial. Give me Grace, I pray thee, to conſider, that this is the Method by which thy own Son was made perfect; that it is no more, nay, it is much leſs than he ſuffered voluntarily, and for my ſake; that by ſuffering Death he hath overcome it, and render'd the Conflict more eaſy to them that come after. Grant me to rejoice, at leaſt to ſupport myſelf, with the nearer Proſpect of an eternal Reſt and Reward.

V. And do thou, O my Soul, labour continually to ſtrengthen thy own Frailties and Fears with holy Meditations, with the repeated Exerciſes of Faith and Repentance, of Truſt and Love, and heavenly-mindedneſs. Bid adieu to this vain World, and ſhake Hands with it chearfully. As for all that is uneaſy here, thank God for a Deliverance from it; and for all whom thou haſt reaſon to love and be concern'd for, remember that thou leaveſt them under the Conduct of the ſame good Providence, of which thyſelf hath had ſo large Experience. Conſider that God is all Relations, and more than all to thoſe that want them; and if they continue to ſeek and ſerve him diligently, he will never forſake them, but be their God and their Guide unto Death. Bid all my Friends weep, not for me, but for themſelves, who are ſtill in a State of Danger and Temptation, of Vanity and Miſery, from which they that die in the Lord are for ever freed. Tell them that we ſhall ſee one another again ſhortly. And as I am going now to thoſe dear and good Souls who have got the Start of me in this Journey, ſo they, and I, and all God's Children, ſhall have a glorious, a joyful Meeting at the Reſurrection of the Juſt. We ſhall all go together into a Place whence Tears and Mourning are for ever baniſh'd, where the Viſion of God, the Service of the Lamb, the Company of Angels and Saints, ſhall miniſter eternal Matter of Praiſe and Joy; and our Happineſs

pineſs will exceed all we can conceive, all we can hope for. And now, *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory?* 1 *Cor.* xv. 55. Thanks be to God, who hath given us the Victory, thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore (my Soul) be thou ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, foraſmuch as I am aſſured that my Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.

EJACULATIONS.

WHile I am at home in the body, I am abſent from the Lord; for I walk by faith, not by ſight; therefore I am confident, and willing rather to be abſent from the body, and to be preſent with the Lord. 2 *Cor.* v. 6. 7. 8.

Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire in compariſon of thee. *Pſal.* lxxiii. 25.

My fleſh and my heart faileth, but God is ſtill my ſtrength, and my life, and my portion for ever. 26.

Fearfulneſs and trembling are come upon me, and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me. lv.

For the enemy of ſouls crieth out aloud, and the ungodly one cometh on faſt; he is minded to do me ſome miſchief, ſo maliciouſly is he ſet againſt me. But I am thine, O ſave me; I am bought with a price, O Jeſus, even with thy moſt precious blood. I am one of thy ſheep, rebuke this ravening wolf, for thou art greater than he, and none is able to pluck me out of thy hand.

Thou that takeſt away the ſins of the world, have mercy upon me. Thou that takeſt away the ſins of the world, receive my prayer; thou that ſitteſt at the right-hand of God, have mercy upon me. Communion Service.

Thou

Pſal. ciii. 8. *Thou, Lord, art full of compaſſion and mercy and long-ſuffering, and of great goodneſs; O*
10. *deal not with me after my ſins, nor reward me according to my iniquities.*
14 *Thou knoweſt whereof we be made, and remembreſt that we are but duſt; look graciouſly therefore upon my weakneſs; pity the interruptions and imperfections of my prayers; pardon what I cannot now do with a ſteddy and compoſed zeal, and accept the ſincerity of my heart.*

Burial Service. *Thou knoweſt, Lord, the ſecrets of my ſoul, ſhut not thy merciful ears to my prayers; but ſpare me, Lord moſt holy, O God moſt mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou moſt worthy judge eternal; ſuffer me not at my laſt hour for any pains of death to fall from thee.*

Heb. xiii. *Faithful is he that hath ſaid,* I will never leave thee nor forſake thee: *Lord, grant me the knowledge and ſenſible experience of this*
Pſal. lvii. *moſt gracious promiſe. Stand by me, and ſave me from the reproof of him that would eat me*
1 *Pet.* iv. *up. Deliver my ſoul from the roaring lion, who goeth about continually, ſeeking whom he may devour.*
1 *Pet.* v. 8. *Lord, I commit my ſoul unto thee, as into the hands of a faithful Creator, and moſt merciful*
Mal. iii. *Redeemer, Spare it, O God, and let it be thine in the day when thou makeſt up thy jewels. In*
Litany. *the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver me.*

Prayer.

O Almighty Lord, Father of Mercies, and God of all Comfort, I flee unto thee for Succour in this my great Extremity; moſt humbly beſeeching thee to ſupport and

ſtrengthen me in the laſt Conflict of my Life. Deliver me from the Snares and Terrors of the wicked One, ſuſtain my Agonies with the peaceful Comforts of a quiet and good Conſcience, and of perfect Reconciliation with thee, my God. Lord, as thou bringeſt me nearer to thyſelf, ſo let my Love and my Deſires of thee be ſtronger. And O that it may pleaſe thee in thy abundant Mercy to afford me ſome ſweet Foretaſte of future Bliſs, that I may triumph even in Death itſelf; but if in this I know not what I aſk, yet at leaſt ſuffer not my Faith to be ſhaken, nor thy Loving-kindneſs to fail; and however thou dealeſt with this corruptible Body, let my Soul, I implore thee, be precious in thy Sight; waſh it in the Blood of the immaculate Lamb of God, that all its Pollutions being purged and done away, it may be preſented pure and without Spot before thee, and be receiv'd into thy everlaſting Kingdom, thro' the Merits and Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, thy only Son, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Short Ejaculations for the laſt Extremities.

I Believe, bleſſed Jeſus, that thou ſhalt come to be my judge; I therefore pray thee help thy ſervant whom thou haſt redeemed with thy precious blood. Te Deum.

O make me now to be numbered with thy ſaints in glory everlaſting.

The ſnares of death compaſs me round about, and its pains get hold upon me; haſte thee, O God, to deliver me; make haſte, O Lord, to help me. Pſal. cxvi. lxx.

Thy kingdom come, O God, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

Lord Jeſus receive my Spirit.

Come, Lord Jeſus, come quickly.

Theſe laſt may be uſed by the Friends and Standers-by, with the neceſſary Alteration of the Perſon, after the ſick Party is diſabled from the Uſe of them.

FINIS.